

Evaluation of Housing Security Policies in Beijing from the Perspective of Youth Development-Oriented City Construction

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Abstract

Housing affordability has become a strategic constraint on the capacity of large cities to attract, integrate, and retain young people. This study evaluates Beijing's youth housing-security policies through the lens of youth development-oriented city construction. It combines three bodies of evidence: 659 Chinese-language journal articles retrieved from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure for 2016-2025 and visualized with CiteSpace 6.4.R1; 332 Beijing policy documents collected for 2016-2025 and examined through temporal, spatial, word-frequency, and text-network analysis; and a questionnaire survey of 132 young people living in Beijing. An integrated framework links housing filtering, social exclusion, youth life-course development, and urban competitiveness to policy evolution and supply-demand matching. The policy corpus shows a wave-shaped trajectory from incremental agenda formation to system building and implementation refinement, with 2021 reaching 63 documents, a year-on-year increase of 142.31%. Policy attention is concentrated in employment- and innovation-intensive districts, while affordable rental housing has become the principal instrument connecting housing provision with talent and development objectives. Survey evidence nonetheless reveals substantial gaps in eligibility requirements, spatial-locational allocation, and the continuity of support, with new-employment-form workers and non-local youth particularly disadvantaged: only 22.0% of respondents reported full coverage and actual benefit; 53.0% identified high entry thresholds as the leading problem; 21.2% spent more than 30% of income on housing; and 25.8% commuted more than one hour each way. Housing cost was important or decisive for more than 70% of respondents' decisions to remain in Beijing. Accordingly, this study proposes that Beijing's indemnificatory housing should optimize the supply-side, implement targeted tiered security, develop long-term institutions, upgrade residential livable quality, and improve collaborative mechanisms, so as to build

a housing-security system adapted to the full-life-cycle development of young people.

Keywords

Youth Development-Oriented City, Housing Security, Affordable Rental Housing, Policy Text Analysis, Beijing

1. Introduction

1.1. Policy Context and Research Problem

Young people are both residents with immediate welfare needs and mobile human capital whose location choices shape a city's long-run productive capacity. This dual status has moved youth housing from the margins of social assistance into the center of urban development policy. In April 2022, seventeen national departments jointly issued the *Opinions on Piloting the Construction of Youth Development-oriented Cities*. The policy called for cities to embed youth priorities in planning, employment, entrepreneurship, housing, public services, and social participation, summarized by the reciprocal aim of making cities friendlier to youth and enabling youth to contribute more fully to cities (Central Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee et al., 2022). It extended the institutional logic of the *Medium- and Long-term Youth Development Plan (2016-2025)*, which defines the principal youth population as persons aged 14-35 and treats secure living conditions as part of an integrated development agenda (Tan, 2017).

Beijing entered the first national pilot round through Xicheng and Shunyi districts, two of the 45 city-level pilot units announced in June 2022. This distinction is important. Youth-oriented governance in the capital is simultaneously municipal, district-based, and functionally differentiated: core districts face intense housing-cost pressures; innovation districts seek to retain highly educated labor; and new towns must coordinate population reception with industry and infrastructure. Beijing's status as the national political center and an international center for scientific and technological innovation amplifies these tensions. The city must reconcile population management and compact growth with a continuing need for graduates, researchers, skilled workers, and platform-economy labor.

Housing policy has consequently broadened beyond conventional assistance to low-income registered households. The *Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Affordable Rental Housing* (Guobanfa [2021] No. 22) established affordable rental housing as a major national instrument for addressing the difficulties of new citizens and young people and required a system characterized by multiple suppliers, multiple channels of provision, and parallel rental and ownership options. Beijing's Housing Security Plan for the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan Period (Jingjianfa [2022] No. 339) translated this direction into a citywide program of

public rental housing, affordable rental housing, and shared-ownership housing. In policy practice, this diversified architecture is increasingly described as a ladder of “one bed, one room, and one apartment”: a low-cost bed for arrival and job search, an independent room for early employment, and a stable dwelling for household formation.

The ladder responds to a specific metropolitan contradiction. Beijing’s high-productivity districts continue to draw young workers, yet wage accumulation at the start of a career rarely keeps pace with central-city rents or ownership costs. Many young residents therefore occupy an institutional gap. They are employed and do not necessarily meet traditional poverty criteria, but they cannot obtain suitable housing through the market and fail eligibility tests based on household registration, continuous social-insurance contributions, formal employment, income documentation, or designated talent status. This study refers to these residents as the “invisible group”: their need is substantial, but it is weakly visible to programs designed around the older categories of registered low-income households or formally certified high-level talent.

The consequences extend beyond shelter. High rents reduce disposable income and limit investment in training, consumption, partnership, and family formation. Peripheral housing can lower monetary rent while imposing long journeys and severe time poverty. Unstable leases weaken neighborhood attachment and access to locally organized services. At the urban scale, these pressures create a talent displacement mechanism: a city may continue to recruit graduates but struggle to retain them through the transition from entry-level work to settled adulthood. Housing affordability is therefore not simply one welfare variable among many. It mediates the relationship between labor-market opportunity, social inclusion, and the credibility of long-term residence.

1.2. Research Objectives and Analytical Questions

The study develops a “four-dimensional theory-policy evolution-supply-demand matching” framework. The theoretical component combines housing filtering, social exclusion, youth life-course development, and urban competitiveness. The institutional component reconstructs the timing, geography, vocabulary, and network structure of Beijing’s youth housing policies between 2016 and 2025. The empirical component evaluates whether policy categories and housing products correspond to the conditions reported by different youth groups.

Three questions guide the analysis. First, how has youth housing moved from a subsidiary topic within general housing security to a policy field connected with talent, employment, and urban development? Second, which groups and locations are well served or weakly served by the emerging mix of public rental housing, affordable rental housing, talent housing, dormitories, subsidies, and shared-ownership housing? Third, how do housing expenditure, commuting time, institutional access, and preferred forms of support vary across youth identities and life-course stages?

The practical objective is to produce an evidence base for optimizing Beijing's youth housing policy during the Fifteenth Five-Year Plan period. The article does not attempt to prescribe a single tenure solution. It instead identifies the institutional connections required for a functioning ladder: short-duration accommodation must connect to stable rental options; rental assistance must be portable across jobs and districts; and longer-term housing must become accessible as income, partnership, and family needs evolve. The aim is continuity rather than a collection of isolated programs.

1.3. Theoretical and Practical Significance

The study contributes theoretically in three respects. First, it widens the boundary of housing-security analysis. Traditional programs define need through low income, local registration, or severe housing deprivation. Those measures remain necessary but understate the difficulties of working youth with limited accumulated wealth, unstable contracts, or non-local registration. Treating the invisible group as analytically distinct makes it possible to examine relative housing poverty and constrained access without incorrectly equating all young people with conventional welfare recipients.

Second, the framework connects disciplines that are often separated. Housing economics explains stock adjustment and market allocation; social-exclusion theory identifies institutional and spatial barriers; youth studies locates housing within transitions from education to employment and family life; and urban-competitiveness theory explains why housing conditions influence talent location. The combined framework prevents two common reductions: interpreting youth housing only as a supply shortage, or interpreting it only as distributive fairness. In Beijing, housing is simultaneously a market good, a social right, a platform for life-course development, and an input into innovation-led growth.

Third, the study advances a replicable policy-text approach. The macroscopic evidence is not limited to selected landmark documents. Annual publication counts, district patterns, high-frequency terms, and keyword networks reveal changes in policy attention and instrument combinations. These measures are then read alongside micro-level survey evidence. The design allows the policy system's declared priorities to be compared with the population's reported experience.

The practical contribution is equally direct. A youth development-oriented city requires more than an aggregate housing target. It requires dwellings near employment, accessible application rules, public-service continuity, and products that can change with young people's circumstances. These features affect Beijing's capacity to retain skilled workers, support essential service labor, and reduce involuntary long-distance commuting. Because Shanghai, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, and other large cities confront similar pressures, Beijing's experience also provides a comparative case for metropolitan housing governance under tight land and population constraints.

1.4. Data, Methods, and Innovation

The research uses a mixed design with three data layers. The literature layer comprises 659 valid CNKI journal records published between 2016 and 2025. Records were retrieved using precise combinations of subject and keyword terms related to youth and housing security. After irrelevant results were removed, Cite Space 6.4.R1 was used to calculate annual publication patterns and generate keyword co-occurrence and timeline visualizations. The policy layer comprises 332 documents issued between 2016 and 2025, selected from 453 results obtained with the search term “youth housing”. Documents were scraped by Octoparse mainly from the official website of the Beijing Municipal People’s Government for the period 2015-2025. Manual screening was conducted to exclude news reports, draft documents for public comments and duplicate files. Files issued by Beijing-level government agencies and applicable to the whole-city jurisdiction were defined as Beijing-exclusive policies, and this filtered dataset was adopted for subsequent policy-text visual analysis. Documents were collected with Octoparse from national ministries, Beijing municipal agencies, and district-government websites, and were analyzed by year, district, word frequency, and semantic association.

The micro layer is a structured questionnaire completed by 132 respondents in Beijing, with recruitment concentrated in Haidian, Chaoyang, Tongzhou, and Daxing. The instrument covered identity, demographic characteristics, current tenure, housing-expenditure burden, commuting, policy awareness, application barriers, intention to remain in Beijing, and preferred support. The analysis is descriptive. Cross-tabulations reveal patterned associations, but the available dataset does not support claims of causality or statistical significance because no experimental design, sampling weights, standard errors, or inferential test statistics were supplied.

This questionnaire survey clearly defined sample screening criteria and standardized the entire operational process to facilitate evaluation of sampling logic and potential biases. Recruitment channels combined online and offline methods: online, questionnaires were distributed through university employment communities, youth job-seeking platforms, and corporate internal networks; offline, questionnaires were handed out in person in Haidian District, Chaoyang District, Tongzhou District, around universities, and in youth-dense commercial areas. The data collection period spanned from May to July 2026, lasting six weeks to complete all data gathering. A pre-screening question was included in the questionnaire, with inclusion criteria set at ages 18 - 35 and actual residence or employment in Beijing, while respondents not residing in Beijing or outside the target age range were excluded. A total of 186 questionnaires were distributed, with 154 completed responses collected. After removing invalid responses, 132 valid samples remained, yielding an effective response rate of 70.96%. An informed consent statement was placed on the first page of the questionnaire, clearly explaining the research purpose, that data would be used solely for academic purposes, all information would be anonymized, and there would be no risk of per-

sonal information disclosure. Respondents read this statement and voluntarily chose whether to participate—clicking “confirm” indicated their consent to take part, and they could withdraw at any time during completion. The online questionnaire platform implemented IP address restrictions, allowing only one submission per IP address. For paper-based questionnaires, completion times were recorded, and submissions with highly similar content or unusually short response times were excluded to prevent duplicate entries.

This study categorizes respondents into four groups: recent graduates, young professionals, new forms of employment workers, and non-Beijing youth, with clearly defined classification criteria. Recent graduates refer to undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral students who have just completed their studies and have not yet officially started work or have been employed for less than one year in Beijing.

Young professionals are those who have worked in Beijing for over one year and are engaged in technical, managerial, cultural and creative, financial, or related fields. New forms of employment workers include flexible job seekers such as ride-hailing drivers, food delivery riders, couriers, online streamers, and domestic service providers. Non-Beijing youth are individuals without Beijing hukou (household registration) who have worked, studied, or resided in Beijing for at least six months. These categories are not mutually exclusive; some respondents may meet multiple criteria simultaneously. Therefore, the survey adopts a priority principle based on self-reported primary identity, allowing respondents to select the category that best represents their main identity, thereby resolving potential conflicts arising from overlapping eligibility.

The study’s innovation lies less in any individual method than in their connection. At the theoretical level, it integrates four explanatory traditions around a single policy problem. At the methodological level, it links a macro-level map of research and policy attention to micro-level accounts of access and need. At the applied level, it evaluates housing as a sequence across youth development rather than a one-time allocation. This full-life-course orientation is especially important for those whose employment, household, and registration status change faster than conventional housing programs can adjust.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

For the purposes of this study, a youth development-oriented city is understood as one in which housing, employment, public services, and spatial planning are organized in ways that support young people’s transition into urban life and enable their sustained participation in urban development. Following China’s national youth policy, the study defines youth as persons aged 14 - 35, while recognizing that housing needs vary considerably within this age range (Central Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee et al., 2022). Housing security is therefore treated not simply as the provision of subsidized dwellings, but as a

broader set of public and regulated-market arrangements intended to improve housing affordability, stability, accessibility, and locational suitability. Particular attention is paid to the “invisible group”: young residents—including non-local workers, platform workers, employees of small firms, and graduates outside narrowly defined eligibility periods—whose incomes or employment status place them beyond traditional assistance but do not enable them to secure adequate market housing. The analysis draws on four complementary theoretical perspectives, adding urban competitiveness as the fourth theoretical component. This mechanism can be assessed through observable empirical indicators: youth retention rate, commuting rate and housing-burden ratio derived from questionnaire surveys. Specifically, the youth retention rate reflects young people’s willingness to stay in the city; the commuting rate captures the time cost brought by spatial mismatch of housing; the housing-burden ratio measures the economic pressure caused by housing expenditure. These survey-based indicators jointly reflect how housing conditions shape a city’s capacity to attract and retain youth human capital. Housing filtering theory suggests that older dwellings may gradually become accessible to lower-income households as higher-income households move into newer stock (Little, 1976; Smith, 1964). In Beijing, however, sustained demand in employment-accessible areas, urban redevelopment, and the peripheral displacement of lower-cost housing weaken this process, leaving affordable rental housing to perform a compensatory role. Social exclusion theory further shows that housing disadvantage extends beyond the inability to purchase a dwelling; it also includes unstable tenure, restricted housing choice, long commuting times, limited access to public services, and administrative barriers associated with household registration, social insurance, and employment documentation (Lenoir, 1974; Giddens, 1998; Bourdieu, 1986). A youth life-course perspective places these constraints within the transition from education to employment, income accumulation, partnership, and family formation. Housing needs consequently change from short-stay accommodation for job seeking, to stable rental housing during early employment, and ultimately to longer-term family housing. Taken together, these perspectives provide the basis for evaluating whether Beijing’s housing policies merely increase the number of available units or create an accessible and continuous housing pathway for young people at different stages of development.

2.2. International and Domestic Models

International comparison identifies institutional mechanisms rather than ready-made templates. Germany’s postwar social-housing system combined public finance with provision by municipal, nonprofit, cooperative, and private actors. The 1950 Housing Construction Law supported rapid reconstruction; approximately 3.3 million social dwellings were built between 1950 and 1959. Subsidized providers accepted cost-rent and occupancy restrictions for defined periods, after which units could return to the market. Germany later expanded demand-

side allowances, while more than 2000 housing cooperatives holding approximately 2.2 million dwellings remained an important non-state sector. Local programs, including Frankfurt initiatives for students and apprentices, illustrate how broad institutions can be adapted to transitional youth needs (Bonn: Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning, 2022). The lesson for Beijing is not simply to copy limited-term subsidies, but to use contractual obligations to mobilize multiple providers while preserving affordability for a defined public purpose.

Singapore represents a different model. The Housing and Development Board introduced the Home Ownership for the People Scheme in 1964, and close to 80% of the resident population now lives in HDB housing (Housing & Development Board, 2026; Ministry of National Development, 2026). Price, grant, savings, and eligibility rules are integrated into a strongly regulated ownership system. Three-room flats have historically been benchmarked at roughly three times an individual's annual income, and household mortgage burdens are moderated through Central Provident Fund savings and grants. Youth support is embedded primarily in household formation: couples receive priority and grant support, while single applicants generally enter at age 35, although grants and location options have expanded (Government of Singapore, 2024). Singapore demonstrates the value of linking price, finance, and allocation, but its ownership-centered and citizenship-based design is less suited to Beijing's highly mobile non-local youth unless adapted through rental and residence-based instruments. Chinese cities have recently developed more directly comparable ladders. In Beijing, the 2026 special allocation for new graduates and young talent released 3300 units across 14 districts, including 59 public-rental projects and 10 affordable-rental projects. Eligibility was expanded to graduates from the previous five years with a bachelor's degree or above, aged 35 or younger, employed or starting a business in Beijing, and without a home in the city. Projects were concentrated near industrial clusters, rail transit, and universities; rent-reduction arrangements could continue for up to six years. This scheme broadens the time window beyond immediate graduation and brings public and affordable rental projects into a single youth allocation.

Shanghai has strengthened both legal and rental components. In May 2026, the municipal legislature adopted the country's first provincial-level local legislative decision devoted to youth development-oriented city construction, effective June 1. Its Fifteenth Five-Year planning direction includes 250,000 - 270,000 additional affordable rental units or rooms, while the rental benchmark is generally no more than 90% of comparable market rent. The 2026 graduate-housing campaign assembled at least 12,000 units and combined affordable projects with youth hostels offering up to 15 free nights per year; recent graduates who remained unemployed within two years of graduation could use a diploma in place of an employment certificate. A comparative overview of the international and domestic youth housing-security models is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. International and domestic youth housing-security models.

Jurisdiction	Dominant mechanism	Youth-relevant instrument	Transferable lesson for Beijing
Germany	Time-limited social obligations with plural providers	Student and apprentice housing; cooperatives	Contractual affordability can mobilize non-state supply
Singapore	Regulated public ownership linked to savings and grants	Couple support; regulated access for singles	Price, finance, and allocation should be coordinated
Beijing	Special allocation across public and affordable rental housing	3300 units in 2026; age 35 or below; five-year graduation window	Municipal pooling can reduce fragmented access
Shanghai	Legislation plus a multi-level rental system	15 free nights; graduate rental campaign	Legal duties and arrival-stage support can be combined
Shenzhen	Choice between discounted transitional housing and allowance	About 60% of market rent for 36 months or CNY 1250 monthly	Cash and in-kind options can be made substitutable
Hangzhou	Large-scale rental provision and mixed instruments	Talent rentals, youth hostels, subsidy, provident fund	A full-cycle system benefits from multiple supply channels

Shenzhen's Implementation Measures for Housing Support for Young Talent, issued in December 2025 and effective January 1, 2026, organizes assistance from a 15-day "Dream Sailing" arrival program to "Dream Launch" discounted rentals and transitional rooms. Eligible young talent may choose either housing at approximately 60% of reference market rent for up to 36 months or a monthly housing allowance of CNY 1250 before tax, paid for up to 24 months. The arrangement demonstrates a transparent choice between in-kind and cash support and a three-year stabilization period.

Hangzhou has pursued scale and diversification. By the end of 2025, the city reported a cumulative stock of approximately 270,500 affordable rental units or rooms serving about 400,000 new citizens and young residents. Talent rentals are generally priced at no more than 70% of assessed market rent. The Qinglifang Qihangfu project contains 1308 units, with advertised entry rents from CNY 699, while youth hostels and annual rental subsidies extend support from arrival to settled employment. The model is notable for combining conversion of existing stock, concentrated projects, cash benefits, and provident-fund support.

The comparison highlights four design principles. Provision should be plural rather than government-only; affordability obligations must be explicit and time-bounded where necessary; assistance should begin before stable employment is established; and benefits should remain connected as a person moves from short stay to longer residence. None of the models eliminates rationing. Their relevance lies in how they structure choices and transitions.

2.3. Literature Review Based on CiteSpace Visualization

2.3.1. Data and Publication Trajectory

The CNKI search covered 2016-2025 and used the combinations "subject = housing security AND keyword = youth," "subject = youth housing," and "subject = youth housing security," with exact matching. Of 721 initial records, 659 were re-

tained after irrelevant results were removed. CiteSpace 6.4.R1 was configured with yearly slices, keywords as the node type, and the g-index for node selection.

Figure 1 presents the annual publication trend. Annual publication volume rose from approximately 67 articles in 2016 and 2017 to 79 in 2018. It reached 86 in 2019 and peaked at 87 in 2021. After 2022, the count declined, reaching 46 in 2023 and approximately 29 in 2025. The last figure should be interpreted cautiously because annual indexing may have been incomplete. More substantively, the shift is consistent with a field moving from broad problem identification and institutional advocacy toward narrower questions of affordable-rental operation, accessibility, spatial justice, and policy performance.

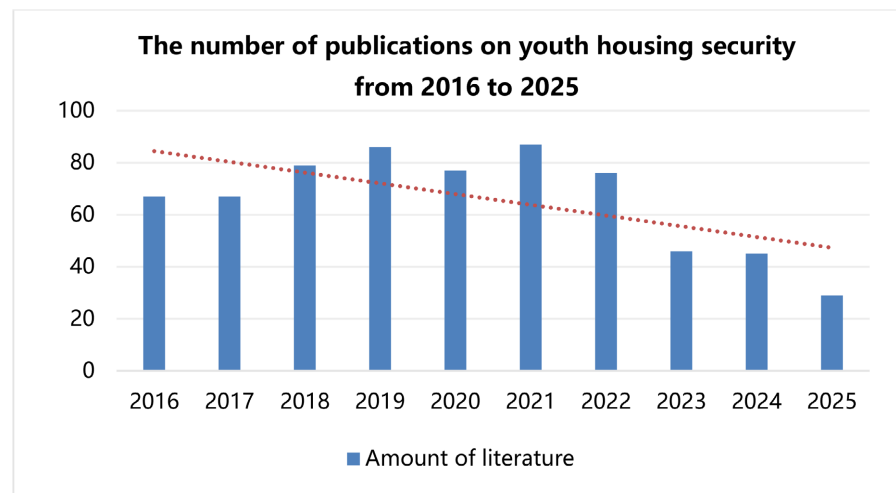


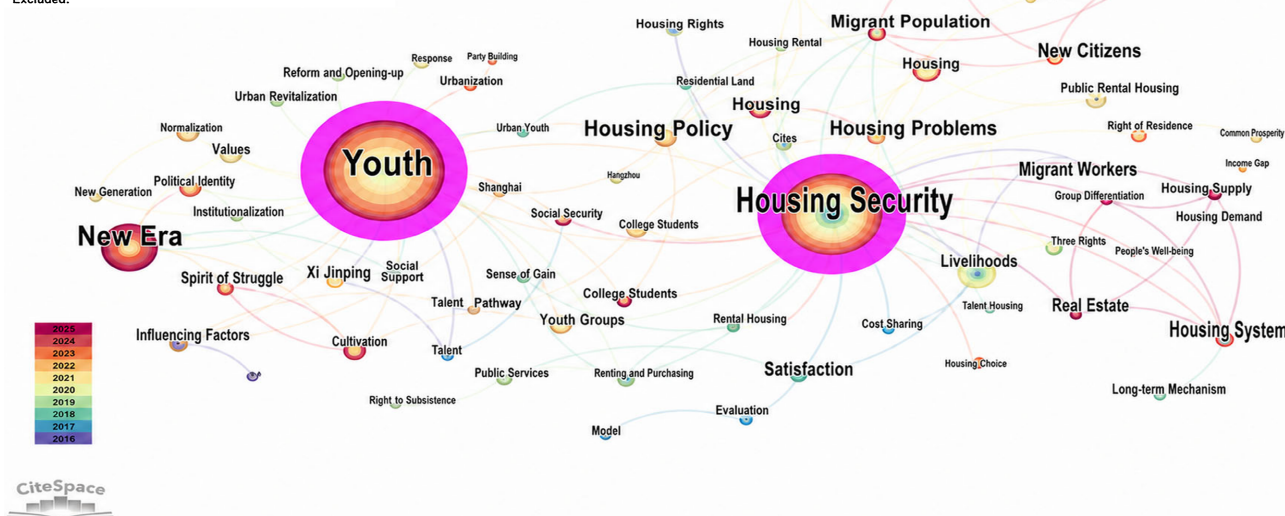
Figure 1. Annual publication volume on youth housing security in CNKI, 2016-2025.

2.3.2. Keyword Co-Occurrence and Thematic Structure

Figure 2 shows the keyword co-occurrence network. The keyword network contains 172 nodes and 229 links, with a density of 0.0156. The modularity score is $Q = 0.5895$, indicating a reasonably differentiated community structure, while the source report records a weighted mean silhouette of $S = 0.9501$. The network is neither a fully integrated field nor a collection of disconnected topics. Its sparse core-periphery form suggests that a limited set of concepts connects several more specialized strands.

Four substantive themes emerge. The first concerns youth housing conditions, including affordability, tenure instability, co-residence, and housing pathways. Census- and survey-based work shows that aggregate floor space can conceal disadvantages among renters, dormitory residents, and young people in first-tier cities. Research on Shanghai further demonstrates that non-local renters occupy more restricted and unstable housing pathways than young homeowners or locally registered residents.

The second theme concerns housing policy and institutional reform. Scholars note that youth support has historically been dispersed across general housing programs rather than established as a coherent policy field. Recent work argues



that affordable housing should move from residual relief toward a development-oriented and standing institution, extend eligibility beyond households facing simultaneous income and housing hardship, diversify providers, and cover the full use cycle (Chen & Qi, 2025). This literature provides the immediate institutional background for the present study.

The third theme connects young people with new citizens, migrants, and public rental housing. It places housing within mobility and urban integration rather than treating it only as a real-estate issue. Studies of employment-housing coordination emphasize the availability, stability, and affordability of accommodation for newly employed groups. Spatial research shows that peripheral public-rental distributions can create low job accessibility and long commutes, reinforcing the need to evaluate housing and transport together (Rao et al., 2026).

The fourth theme shifts from housing supply toward youth development and urban governance. Keywords such as talent housing, public services, satisfaction, and social support indicate growing interest in policy outcomes and city attachment. Recent empirical studies examine satisfaction with affordable housing, willingness to pay, and the effect of access on perceived gains. Other research links housing stratification with consumption, identity, and fertility planning, widening the dependent variables through which housing policy is evaluated (Wen, 2025).

2.3.3. Keyword Timeline

The timeline visualization identifies six principal clusters: #0 youth, #1 housing security, #2 new citizens, #3 housing system, #4 public rental housing, and #5

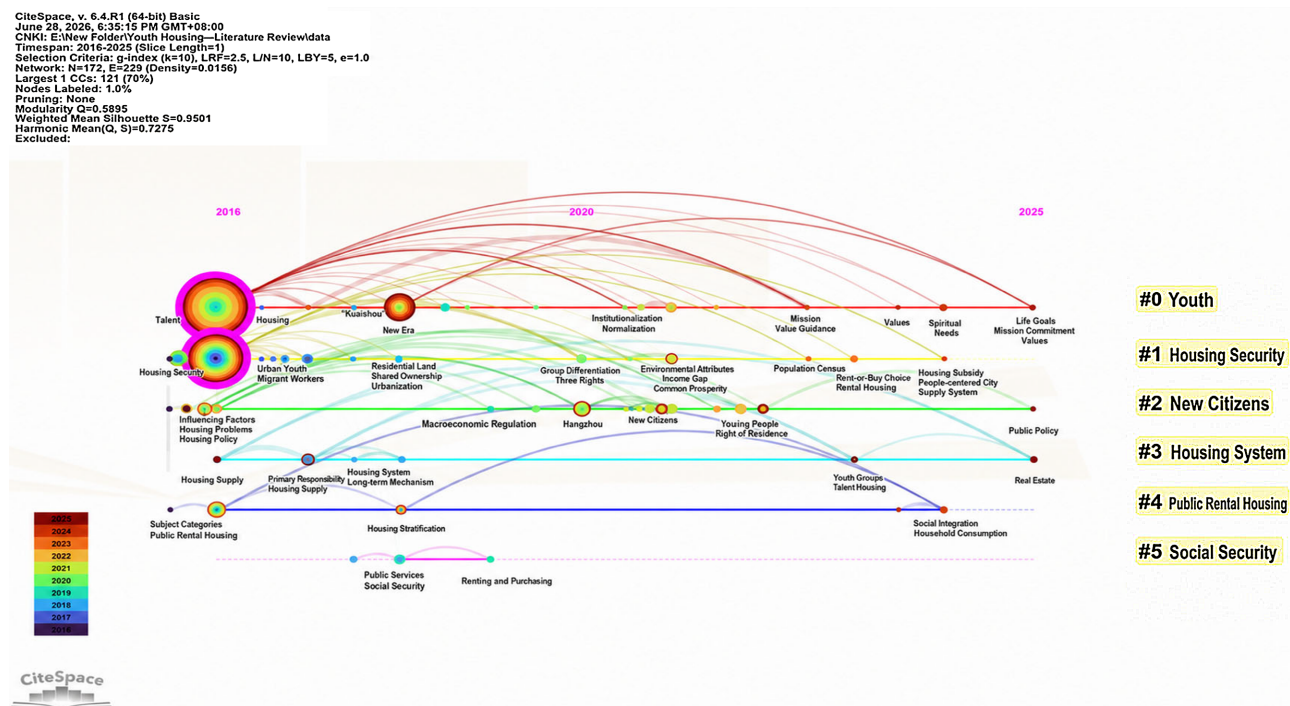


Figure 3. Keyword timeline for Chinese research on youth housing security, 2016-2025.

social security. The “youth” cluster runs through the period, but its associated vocabulary changes from housing difficulty and demand to urban youth, talent, social support, and development. The “housing security” cluster connects policy, supply, and rental housing across the decade. “New citizens” becomes more prominent after 2020, reflecting the policy recognition of mobile workers. “Public rental housing” is stronger earlier, while affordable rental and talent housing become more visible later (Figure 3).

The temporal structure is consistent with an intellectual transition from a tenure-centered question—how to provide subsidized housing—to a governance question—how housing affects urban integration, life-course development, and city competitiveness. It also exposes three gaps. Youth categories remain too coarse, with limited differentiation by employment form, registration, age, and household transition. Most studies are cross-sectional and cannot observe movement through housing pathways. Finally, systematic policy evaluation remains less developed than policy description: studies often assess one project, tenure, or population rather than the interaction of coverage, cost, location, and retention. The present analysis addresses these gaps by separating youth identities, reading housing through a life-course framework, and comparing policy-text priorities with survey-reported experience.

2.3.4. Recent Progress in Youth Housing Research

Recent international research on youth housing has shifted from measuring affordability alone to examining insecure tenure, delayed residential independence, intergenerational inequality, and the cumulative effects of housing insecurity

across the life course (OECD, 2024; Yuan, 2025; Kährlik & Pastak, 2023). Chinese scholarship has followed a similar direction while paying particular attention to rapid urbanisation and institutional access. Existing studies show that young renters—especially non-local residents in major cities—face weaker housing stability, limited purchasing power, and marked differences in housing opportunities shaped by household registration, employment status, income, and family resources. Research has also expanded from housing supply to policy implementation, spatial accessibility, jobs-housing balance, resident satisfaction, and wider social outcomes. The emerging consensus is that increasing housing stock alone does not constitute effective security: eligibility rules, application access, rent burden, commuting time, public services, and benefit continuity jointly determine whether young people can obtain and retain suitable housing. However, much of the existing evidence remains cross-sectional and city-specific, and young people are often classified by a single identity, such as graduate, migrant, talent, or renter, despite the interaction of multiple disadvantages. This study therefore combines bibliometric analysis, policy-text analysis, and an exploratory survey in Beijing to identify mismatches between policy priorities and young people’s actual housing experiences.

3. Policy Evolution and Institutional Characteristics

3.1. Policy Text Preprocessing and Text-Mining Methods

The collected policy texts were cleaned: URLs, headers, footers, policy document reference numbers, dates and other format-related information irrelevant to semantic analysis were removed. Only main-text content concerning policy objectives, target groups, policy instruments and safeguard measures was retained. The general Chinese-language analysis module of MicroWordCloud was adopted for Chinese word segmentation. A custom dictionary was built for domain-specific expressions in the field of youth housing security. Based on actual wording in policy documents, compound terms with complete policy connotations, including affordable rental housing, public rental housing, talent housing, youth apartment and the shorthand *bao-zu-fang*, were added as custom entries to prevent general Chinese word-segmentation tools from splitting these specialized concepts.

Stop-word processing was conducted on this basis. A general Chinese stop-word list was used to filter out semantically empty function words such as “de (of)”, “le (perfective particle)”, “he (and)”, “ji (as well as)”. Furthermore, an extended stop-word list was developed tailored to the linguistic features of official policy documents. High-frequency formulaic bureaucratic phrases with weak thematic discrimination power, such as “this municipality”, “in terms of”, “relevant”, “further”, and “intensity”, were manually eliminated. In addition, variant expressions referring to the same policy concept were standardized: the shorthand *bao-zu-fang* was unified as affordable rental housing. Housing types with distinct policy implications, namely public rental housing, affordable rental housing, talent housing and youth apartment, were retained as separate terms.

3.2. Temporal Evolution

The policy corpus was collected with Octoparse using the keyword “youth housing.” The initial search produced 453 records, of which 332 documents fell within 2016-2025 and met the study’s relevance criteria. Counts represent policy-document activity, not legal force or budgetary scale; a notice, implementation rule, or planning document is counted once. The series should therefore be interpreted as policy attention and administrative elaboration.

During the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan period, annual output rose from 19 documents in 2016 to 26 in 2020 and remained above an annual average of 25 despite a modest decline in 2019-2020. This was an agenda-building stage. Youth housing appeared increasingly within talent, rental, graduate, and district-development policies, but the field had not yet acquired a unified instrument structure (Figure 4).

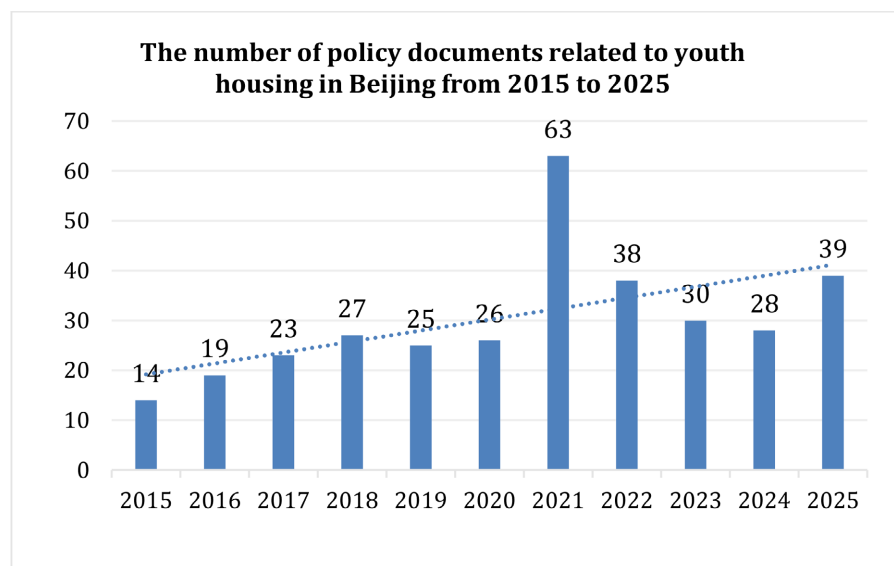


Figure 4. Annual number of Beijing youth housing-related policy documents, 2016-2025.

The decisive break occurred in 2021. Policy output increased to 63 documents, 142.31% above the previous year and the highest level in the series. The national affordable-rental opinion provided a common institutional vocabulary and authorized local experimentation with land, finance, conversion, and multiple providers. Beijing then developed municipal guidance and district-level implementation, including an explicit preference for industrial parks, rail-transit areas, and locations with established services to improve jobs-housing balance. The peak therefore marks a transition from fragmented exploration to system construction. Output declined from 38 documents in 2022 to 28 in 2024. This contraction is better interpreted as implementation refinement than withdrawal: after the dense production of framework rules, administrative work shifted toward projects, eligibility, allocation, and operation. In 2025, output rose to 39 documents, an increase of 39.29%, suggesting renewed attention at the transition to the Fifteenth Five-Year Plan. Across the full period, the pattern is “steady rise-large increase-

cial target population. Rental housing, the housing-security system, construction, public services, and urban development form the supporting layer (Figure 6).

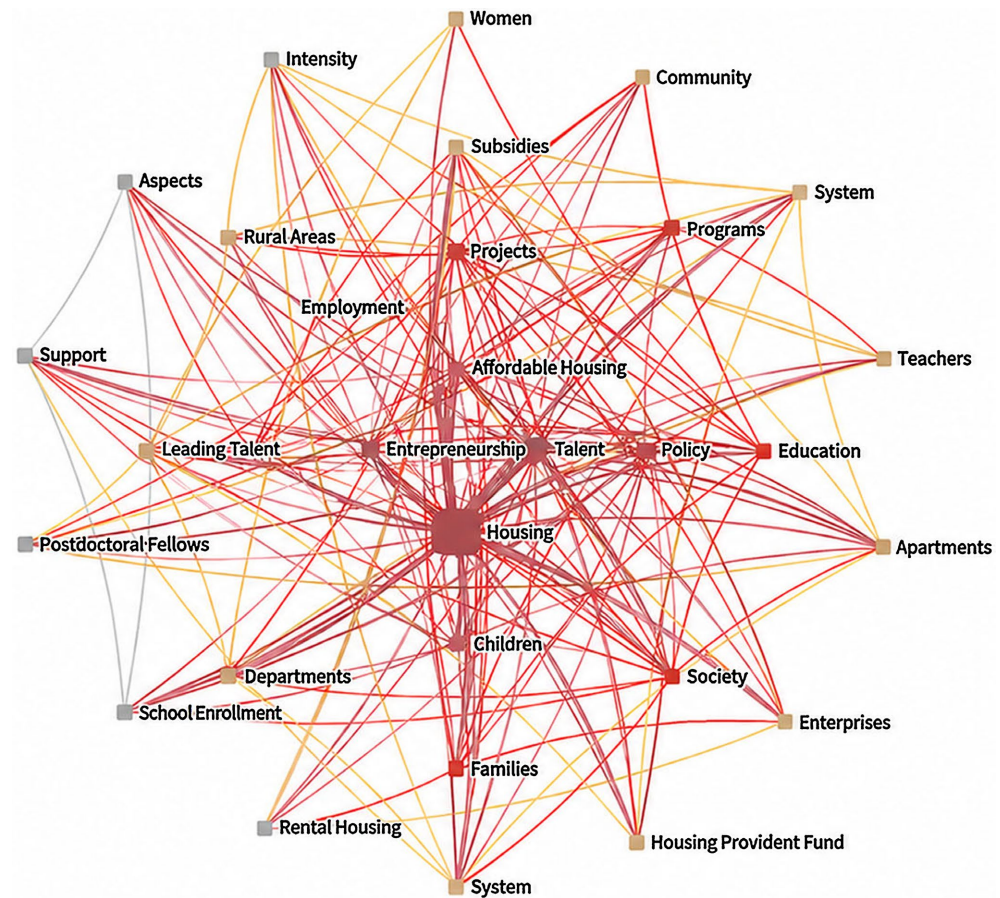


Figure 6. Keyword network of Beijing youth housing-related policy documents, 2016-2025.

Six institutional characteristics are visible. Housing security has become a policy core rather than a subsidiary welfare label. Youth are increasingly identified directly, although new-employment and non-local groups remain less institutionally secure. Affordable rental housing is the main growth point because it can combine government support with enterprise, institutional, collective-land, and conversion projects. Policy objectives have expanded toward talent retention, population governance, and urban vitality. Provision is becoming multi-actor and multi-channel. Finally, the network records a three-stage evolution: expansion of protected categories in 2016-2018; formation of a recognizable youth housing system in 2019-2021; and integration with youth development-oriented city construction in 2022-2025.

The network also reveals a structural limitation. Strong links among housing, talent, and development do not automatically imply strong links among housing, flexible employment, portability, and universal service access. The density of the first set of concepts and relative weakness of the second foreshadow the access gaps observed in the survey.

4. Empirical Analysis: Survey Evidence from Beijing Youth

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

The survey contains 132 respondents. Identity information was available for 131 cases: recent university graduates accounted for 47.7% (63), young talent for 25.0% (33), new-employment-form workers for 13.6% (18), and non-Beijing youth for 12.9% (17). The first two categories dominate the sample, which is consistent with the visibility of graduate and talent programs. The latter two groups are smaller but analytically important because their employment and registration conditions are least compatible with conventional eligibility rules.

Men constituted 61.4% (81) and women 38.6% (51), a ratio of approximately 1.59:1. This imbalance limits population-level gender inference. It may partly reflect recruitment among platform and technology workers, but the survey does not provide the information needed to test that explanation. Gender-sensitive concerns such as shared-housing safety, nighttime mobility, and neighborhood services should therefore be retained as policy questions rather than inferred from the sample composition.

Age has a bimodal distribution. Respondents aged 18 - 22 accounted for 32.6% (43), while those aged 31 - 35 accounted for 30.3% (40). The 26 - 30 group represented 22.0% (29), and the 23 - 25 group only 15.2% (20). The smallest band is particularly revealing: respondents aged 23 - 25 are often beyond the narrow window of graduate programs but have not accumulated the work history, savings, or formal recognition required by longer-term schemes. They are a life-course “policy sandwich,” not because their need is lower, but because program boundaries intersect their transition poorly.

Educational attainment is high. Bachelor’s degree holders represented 50.8% (67), and respondents with graduate education or above represented 22.0% (29). High school, secondary technical school, or vocational-school graduates accounted for 15.9% (21), while junior-college graduates accounted for 11.4% (15). The distribution mirrors Beijing’s knowledge-intensive economy but also exposes the exclusionary potential of education-based talent housing. More than one quarter of respondents did not hold a bachelor’s degree and may have substantial housing need while remaining outside qualification pathways designed for graduates. The demographic characteristics of the survey respondents are presented in **Table 2**.

4.2. Housing Status

Owner-occupied housing, including shared-ownership housing, accounted for 34.1% of current arrangements. Employer or school dormitories accounted for 26.5%, and rental housing for 28.8%; shared rental alone represented 16.7%. Borrowed accommodation and other arrangements accounted for 10.6%. The relatively large owner and dormitory shares mean that aggregate housing-cost estimates should not be interpreted as representative of all young private renters in Beijing. Dormitories may minimize rent but remain tied to education or employ-

ment, while ownership may reflect prior family resources or shared-ownership access. The respondents' housing tenure, housing-expenditure burden, and commuting time are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 2. Sample demographic profile (overall N = 132; valid identity responses).

Dimension	Category	Number	Percentage
Identity	Recent university graduate	63	47.7%
	Young talent	33	25.0%
	New-employment-form worker	18	13.6%
	Non-Beijing youth	17	12.9%
Gender	Male	81	61.4%
	Female	51	38.6%
Age	18 - 22	43	32.6%
	23 - 25	20	15.2%
	26 - 30	29	22.0%
	31 - 35	40	30.3%
Education	High school/secondary technical/vocational school	21	15.9%
	Junior college	15	11.4%
	Bachelor's degree	67	50.8%
	Graduate degree or above	29	22.0%

Table 3. Housing tenure, expenditure burden, and commuting time.

Indicator	Category	Percentage
Current tenure	Owner-occupied, including shared ownership	34.1%
	Employer/school dormitory	26.5%
	Rental housing	28.8%
	Borrowed accommodation and other	10.6%
Housing expenditure/income	Below 10%	46.2%
	Above 30%	21.2%
	Above 50%	5.3%
One-way commute	30 minutes or less	49.2%
	30 - 60 minutes	25.0%
	1 - 1.5 hours	17.4%
	1.5 - 2 hours	6.1%
	More than 2 hours	2.3%

Housing expenditure is polarized. For 46.2% of respondents, housing con-

sumed less than 10% of income, a result strongly influenced by dormitory and owner groups. At the other end, 21.2% spent more than 30% of income and 5.3% spent more than 50%. Using the conventional thresholds, these respondents faced housing-cost overburden and severe overburden, respectively. The data do not establish the burden rate among private renters alone, but they demonstrate that the apparent low-cost majority coexists with a material high-burden minority.

Commuting adds a non-monetary dimension. A journey of 30 minutes or less was reported by 49.2% (65), 30 - 60 minutes by 25.0% (33), 1 - 1.5 hours by 17.4% (23), 1.5 - 2 hours by 6.1% (8), and more than two hours by 2.3% (3). Thus, 25.8% traveled more than one hour each way and 8.4% more than 1.5 hours. Affordable housing located far from employment may reduce cash rent while increasing the total cost of residence through travel expenditure, fatigue, and lost discretionary time.

Respondents' three-year housing plans were dispersed across continued renting, applications for protected housing, and purchase. Because the source material does not provide category percentages, the distribution is interpreted only qualitatively. Its diversity nevertheless confirms that a single tenure program cannot serve the full sample. Some respondents need immediate rental relief; others need a stable medium-term lease; and older respondents increasingly consider ownership or long-term family housing.

4.3. Policy Awareness and Evaluation

Only 22.0% of respondents reported that policy fully covered them and that they had benefited. A further 30.3% described partial coverage with a high threshold. In total, 18.2% reported little or no coverage; within the full response distribution, 6.1% explicitly identified themselves as completely uncovered and in a policy blind spot. The categories show that nominal eligibility and effective access are different. A person may be aware of a program or theoretically eligible yet remain unable to obtain a unit because of documentation, limited supply, timing, or location.

High entry thresholds were the most frequently selected problem, identified by 53.0%. Remote location and insufficient supply were tied at 40.2%. Publicity was selected by 13.6%, but information barriers appear larger when application questions are considered: 31.8% reported that they did not understand the policy or process. The divergence suggests that respondents may regard publicity as secondary to eligibility while still experiencing information as an operational barrier.

The high share of respondents who had never applied is itself informative. Non-application cannot be equated with lack of need; it may reflect anticipatory exclusion, in which potential applicants assume they are ineligible, cannot locate an appropriate program, or judge the process not worth the expected benefit. Among those with application experience, evaluations were divided. Online processing and one-stop reforms improved convenience for some, whereas multi-department verification and repeated documentation remained burdensome for others.

Awareness among recent graduates was also limited. The proportion who were highly familiar with the relevant programs and had applied or intended to apply was low, while “heard of it but do not know the details” and “completely unaware” were common responses. This gap is consequential because graduate programs often have short eligibility windows. Information delivered after graduation or through general government websites may arrive too late. Universities, employers, and digital platforms should be treated as delivery institutions rather than merely publicity channels (Figure 7).

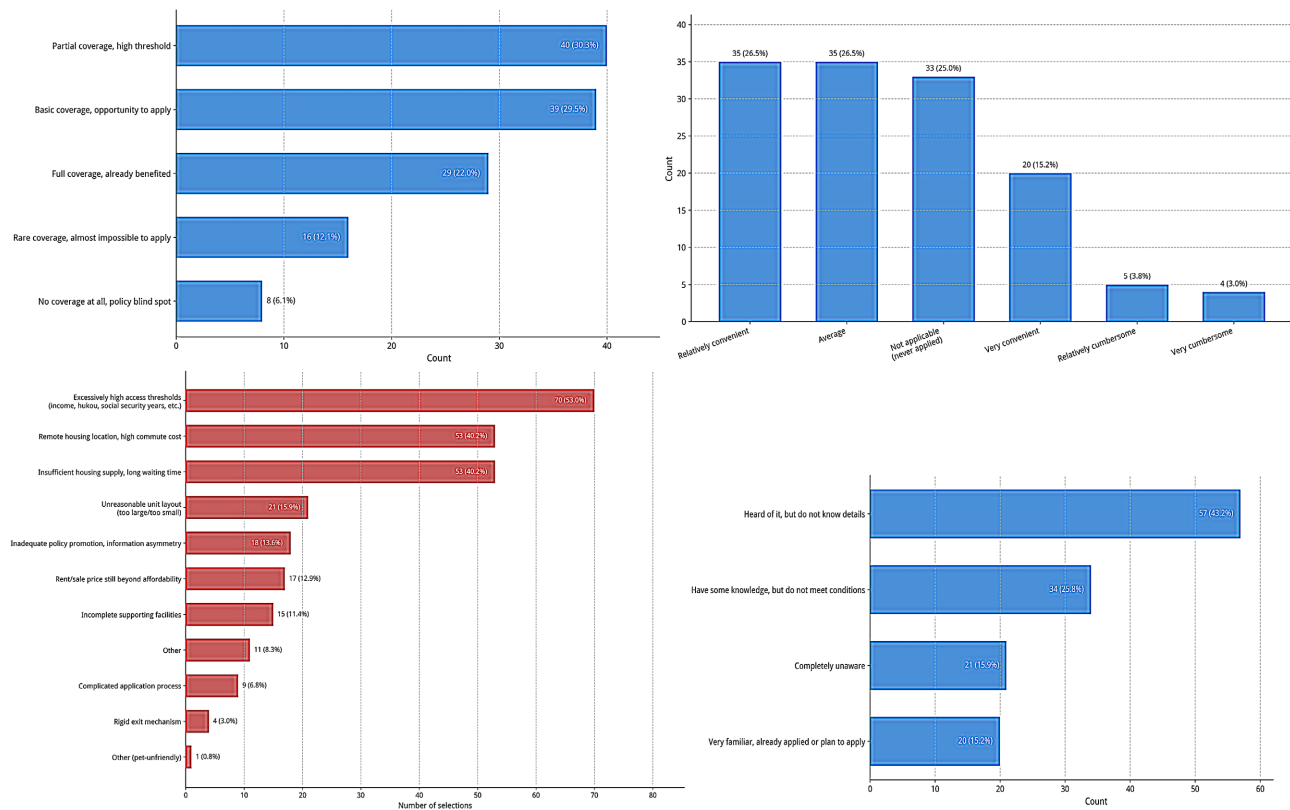


Figure 7. Perceived policy coverage, principal policy problems, application convenience, and graduate awareness.

4.4. Beijing Retention Intention and Housing Cost

A majority wished to remain in Beijing, but the commitment was conditional. Respondents who “very much” or “rather” wanted to stay accounted for 56.1%. A further 29.5% would decide according to housing and employment conditions, while 9.8% expected to leave. The conditional group is the most policy-sensitive: its members have not rejected Beijing, but the cost and stability of residence influence whether urban opportunity can be converted into a long-term life plan.

Housing cost was important or decisive for more than 70% of respondents’ retention decisions, and 30.3% described it as decisive. This result is consistent with the urban-competitiveness mechanism: high nominal wages and abundant opportunities may not retain labor when the real income remaining after housing is inadequate. The result should not be interpreted to mean that housing dominates

every individual decision, but it establishes housing as a central and actionable component of retention policy.

Employer housing support was uneven. The most common response was that the employer offered no support although the respondent wanted it. This pattern produces a secondary inequality. Workers in public institutions, large state-owned enterprises, universities, or major technology firms may receive dormitories, allowances, or access to designated housing. Workers in small firms, platform companies, dispatch arrangements, or casual employment often have lower or more volatile incomes and no organizational housing channel. Employment-based benefits can therefore reinforce rather than offset labor-market inequality.

Housing support also entered occupational decisions. A substantial share of respondents regarded housing policy as an important factor in remaining with an employer or changing jobs. Public housing provision can thus reduce the metropolitan housing premium borne by firms and improve the competitive position of small employers that cannot independently provide accommodation. Conversely, excessive reliance on employer-linked allocation may reduce labor mobility and cause benefit loss after a job change. Public support should complement workplace provision while remaining portable. Respondents' intention to remain in Beijing and the perceived influence of housing costs are presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Beijing retention intention and perceived influence of housing costs.

Dimension	Response category	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Intention to stay in Beijing	Very much want to stay	52	39.4
	Relatively want to stay	22	16.7
	Depends on housing/employment conditions	39	29.5
	Reluctant to stay	6	4.5
	Definitely leaving	13	9.8
	Positive intention to stay	74	56.1
Influence of housing costs on staying decisions	Decisive factor	40	30.3
	Important factor	55	41.7
	General factor	23	17.4
	Little impact	7	5.3
	No impact	7	5.3
	Important or decisive factor	95	72.0

4.5. Housing Needs and Policy Preferences

Commuting convenience was the most frequently selected housing attribute, chosen by 68.9%, ahead of rent or purchase price at 58.3% and neighborhood facilities at 44.7%. This ordering is one of the survey's most important findings. It shows that affordability cannot be evaluated independently of location. A low-rent unit

that adds two hours to the daily commute may be rejected even if it satisfies a formal affordability rule. Jobs-housing balance should therefore enter site selection, allocation, and subsidy design. The survey results concerning policy access, housing priorities, support preferences, and application barriers are presented in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Policy access, housing priorities, support preferences, and application barriers.

Indicator	Response	Percentage
Policy coverage	Fully covered and benefited	22.0%
	Basic coverage; with a chance to apply	29.5%
	Partial coverage, high threshold	30.3%
	It is rarely covered and almost impossible to apply for	12.1%
	Completely uncovered, policy blind spot	6.1%
Principal policy problem	Entry threshold too high	53.0%
	Remote location	40.2%
	Insufficient supply	40.2%
Most valued housing factor	Commuting convenience	68.9%
	Rent/purchase price	58.3%
	Neighborhood facilities	44.7%
Preferred support	Rental cash subsidy	21.2%
	Low-rent dormitory/blue-collar apartment	18.9%
	Flexible short-term housing	16.7%
Application barrier	Unstable income difficult to document	37.9%
	Unfamiliar with policy/process	31.8%
	No fixed employer/irregular social insurance	25.8%
	Household-registration restriction	20.5%

Preferences for assistance were correspondingly diverse. Nearly 40% preferred housing close to the workplace. Cash rental subsidies were preferred by 21.2%, low-rent collective dormitories or blue-collar apartments by 18.9%, and flexible short-term housing by 16.7%. In-kind units are valuable when government or employers can secure good locations; subsidies are more portable where supply is dispersed; dormitories can provide a low-cost floor for essential workers; and short leases match the uncertainty of job search and initial employment. A mixed toolkit is not administrative redundancy if each instrument serves a different transition.

Application barriers reveal a mismatch between program design and contemporary employment. Unstable income that was difficult to document was reported by 37.9%, lack of policy or process knowledge by 31.8%, absence of a fixed employer or regular social-insurance contributions by 25.8%, and household-regis-

tration restrictions by 20.5%. Traditional rules assume a stable employer, a continuous contribution record, and standardized wage documentation. Platform work, dispatch, part-time work, and multiple-job portfolios violate these assumptions even when total labor-market attachment is substantial.

Registration operates as a deeper constraint. Overall, 48.5% regarded household registration as an important or decisive obstacle, including 22.0% who considered it decisive and believed they could not apply.

At the same time, 63.6% supported relaxing the registration requirement in exchange for a longer social-insurance contribution period. This preference indicates support for a contribution- and residence-based principle, although the survey does not determine the appropriate duration. Any reform should avoid simply replacing one rigid threshold with another that reproduces exclusion among workers with interrupted or platform-mediated contributions.

Most respondents favored at least partial integration of talent housing and affordable rental housing, either through unified application or coordinated classification. Non-standard employment accounted for a substantial share of work arrangements, and the proportion without a residence permit was notable. These responses point toward a single application interface capable of checking multiple programs, recognizing alternative income evidence, and connecting residence-permit processing with housing applications.

4.6. Cross-Analysis: Key Findings

Identity is associated with housing burden. Recent university graduates had the lightest burden, largely because many lived in school or employer dormitories. New-employment-form workers had the heaviest burden, while non-Beijing youth combined relatively high expenditure with weak access to protected housing. Young talent displayed a more dispersed pattern, consistent with internal heterogeneity between owners, subsidized tenants, and private renters. These differences argue against treating “youth” as a homogeneous policy category.

Housing expenditure and retention intention move in opposite directions. Respondents spending less than 10% of income on housing recorded the strongest desire to remain. Once expenditure exceeded 30%, the shares intending to leave or conditioning their decision on circumstances rose sharply. Because the evidence is a cross-tabulation, the relationship should be described as a negative association rather than a causal effect: income, family support, occupation, and tenure may jointly affect expenditure and retention. Nevertheless, the 30% threshold identifies a policy-relevant risk group.

It should be noted that the share of housing burden above 30% presented in **Table 6** denotes row-level percentages within each mutually-exclusive identity subgroup. Estimated case counts converted from subgroup percentages cannot be summed directly; thus cross-tabulated subgroup results are not required to match the aggregate sample statistic of 21.2% ($N = 28$). The prevalence of heavy housing

burden varies noticeably across different youth subgroups.

Fully/basic coverage is a composite derived variable aggregated from two original response options of survey Question 12: “Fully covered and already benefited” and “Basic coverage, opportunity to apply”. Respondents selecting either of these two options are coded as “Fully/basic coverage”. Policy coverage also varies by identity. Recent graduates and recognized young talent reported better coverage, consistent with dedicated allocation and talent programs. New-employment-form workers and non-Beijing youth were much more likely to report little coverage or a blind spot. This is the survey counterpart of the policy-text network: the system strongly connects youth housing with graduates and talent, but less strongly with portable eligibility for flexible workers and non-local residents. Age differences follow the life course. Respondents aged 18 - 22 preferred collective dormitories and flexible short stays. Those aged 26 - 30 placed greater emphasis on workplace-adjacent housing and rental subsidies. Respondents aged 31 - 35 favored stable long-term arrangements and were more likely to consider ownership-oriented or family housing. The 23 - 25 group remains institutionally vulnerable because it may have left graduate programs without becoming eligible for longer-term options.

Finally, commuting time is negatively associated with retention. Respondents commuting less than 30 minutes had the strongest intention to remain, whereas the intention to leave increased among those traveling more than 1.5 hours. This pattern reinforces the joint “money-time” character of housing burden. Policies that minimize rent by locating units at the metropolitan edge may shift cost from the housing budget to daily time and transport. A credible ladder-style system must therefore coordinate affordability, location, and duration rather than optimizing any one dimension in isolation.

Taken together, the survey findings identify three mismatches. The first is categorical: eligibility remains better aligned with recent graduates and formally recognized talent than with flexible workers and non-local youth. The second is spatial: respondents prioritize commuting, while remote location remains one of the most frequently reported policy problems. The third is temporal: short-stay, rental, and ownership programs exist, but movement between them is weakly institutionalized. These findings complete the study’s evaluative framework and establish the empirical basis for subsequent analysis of policy shortcomings and optimization pathways. The main results of the cross-analysis are summarized in **Table 6**.

5. Dilemmas and Optimization Paths of Youth Housing Security in the Capital

Based on the previous empirical results from policy-text analysis and questionnaire surveys on youth housing security in Beijing, it can be found that although Beijing has continuously expanded the supply of affordable rental housing during the 14th Five-Year Plan period and established a stepped housing product framework of “one bed, one room, one apartment” to provide diversified residential

Table 6. Cross-analysis of youth housing conditions and policy attitudes.

Cross-analysis	Subgroup or category	Key statistics (%)	Main finding
Identity × housing expenditure	Graduating students	Below 10%: 63; Above 30%: 17	Graduating students generally bear the lowest housing-cost burden, largely because of access to school or employer dormitories.
	Workers in new employment forms	Below 10%: 28; Above 30%: 23	Unstable income and limited employer support increase their exposure to housing-cost pressure.
	Young talents	Below 10%: 33; Above 30%: 31	Housing expenditure is highly differentiated between homeowners and market renters.
	Non-local youth	Below 10%: 24; Above 30%: 30	Non-local youth face the combined pressure of relatively high expenditure and restricted policy access.
Housing expenditure × intention to stay	Housing expenditure below 10%	Very much want to stay: 56	Low housing expenditure is generally associated with stronger retention intention.
	Housing expenditure of 30% - 40%	Very much want to stay: 12; Depends on conditions: 35	Retention intention weakens markedly once expenditure reaches the housing-cost-overburden threshold.
	Housing expenditure above 50%	Very much want to stay: 29; Definitely leaving: approximately 43	Severe housing-cost pressure is associated with a higher likelihood of leaving Beijing.
Identity × perceived policy coverage	Graduating students	Fully/basic coverage: 59; Partially covered: 32	Graduating students report the strongest policy coverage.
	Young talents	Fully/basic coverage: 51; Partially covered: 30	Talent-oriented housing programmes provide comparatively strong coverage.
	Workers in new employment forms	Fully/basic coverage: 45; Partially covered: 22	Non-standard employment reduces access to existing programmes.
	Non-local youth	Fully/basic coverage: 35; Partially covered: 35	Non-local youth report the weakest effective policy coverage.
Age × preferred housing support	Age 18 - 22	Near-workplace housing: 51.2; Short-term rental: 16.3	Younger respondents prioritise accessible transitional accommodation.
	Age 23 - 25	Rental subsidy: 40.0; Near-workplace housing: 25.0	Monetary assistance is most strongly preferred by this transitional group.
	Age 26 - 30	Near-workplace housing: 37.9; Rental subsidy: 27.6	Employment accessibility and rental affordability are both important.
	Age 31 - 35	Near-workplace housing: 32.5; Low-rent housing: 25.0	Older youth place greater emphasis on stable, longer-term housing.
Commute time × intention to stay	Commute exceeding one hour	25.8 of the full sample	Longer commuting is associated with weaker intention to remain in Beijing.
	Commute exceeding 1.5 hours	8.4 of the full sample	The negative relationship becomes more pronounced among respondents with very long commutes.

options for young people, against the goal of building a youth-development-oriented city, Beijing's youth housing security system still faces multiple practical constraints including structural supply mismatch, blind spots in group-targeted security, insufficient institutional adaptability, deficiencies in livable supporting

facilities, and inadequate inter-departmental coordination, which weaken the supporting effect of housing policies on youth retention and urban talent agglomeration (Central Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee et al., 2022).

From the supply-side perspective, under the tight land constraints of a megacity, the overall supply expansion has not fully resolved structural contradictions. Housing unit types are misaligned with young people's phased housing demands. Existing public rental housing and shared-ownership housing are dominated by large-size family-oriented units, while small-sized and dormitory-type housing suitable for single and newly-employed youth are only available in a small number of pilot areas. Small-sized security housing is in acute shortage in core urban districts, whereas some security-housing projects in outer suburbs remain vacant, forming an inverted pattern of "scarcity of beds in core areas and vacant large-size apartments in outer suburbs" (Chen & Qi, 2025). In terms of spatial distribution, restricted by land resources in central urban areas, a large number of security-housing projects are located in plain new towns and outer suburbs, poorly matching major youth-intensive employment areas such as Zhongguancun, CBD and Lize Business District. The prominent jobs-housing separation means that some young people commute more than one-way hour, and such time costs offset the welfare gains brought by rent concessions (Rao et al., 2026). In addition, bottlenecks remain in activating stock resources. Reconstruction of non-residential buildings into affordable rental housing suffers from long approval procedures and high renovation costs, leaving limited profit margins for social capital. Decentralized stock housing such as public-owned housing vacated units and idle employer dormitories lacks unified integration and operation platforms, and multi-source supply channels have not been fully activated (Chen et al., 2024).

At the group security level, obvious blind spots and gradient gaps exist in tiered protection. Existing security resources are tilted toward key institutions and recognized talents. Young people employed by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises as well as ordinary non-local youth have limited access to security housing. Restricted by rigid thresholds for social insurance, residence permits and income, a large number of ordinary young people have to rely entirely on the private rental market (Liu & Zhang, 2025). As a vital force sustaining urban operation, workers in new-forms of employment feature flexible labor relations and volatile incomes. They can hardly adapt to application rules designed for fixed employers, and special housing such as rider dormitories is in short supply, leaving them on the margins of policy coverage. Meanwhile, policies remain fragmented. There are no mechanisms for qualification mutual recognition and smooth transition among youth talent stations, special allocation for graduates, public rental housing, affordable rental housing and shared-ownership housing (Tan, 2017). As young people go through job-hunting, employment, marriage and family-formation, job changes or cross-district relocation may lead to interruption of housing benefits. A full-life-cycle security chain covering job-hunting settlement, early-career employment, personal growth and stable resettlement has not been

truly established.

Institutional mechanisms are static and rigid. The adjustment cycles for income eligibility thresholds and rent standards of housing security are relatively long. A regular linkage mechanism tied to residents' disposable income and market rental indices has not been set up, which creates a large group of "sandwich-layer youth": their income slightly exceeds security thresholds yet they still cannot afford market-rate housing (Chen, 2026). The equal rights for renting and purchasing houses are not fully implemented. Core public-service rights such as education are still deeply bound to property ownership, which weakens the institutional value of rental housing as a long-term settlement option. In terms of supervision, inter-departmental data barriers persist and qualification review relies on paper documents. Exit mechanisms feature rigid eviction instead of gradient buffer measures adapted to income fluctuations among young people, resulting in resource misallocation and implementation conflicts (Wen, 2025).

Deficiencies also exist in livable quality and collaborative governance. Large-scale security-housing communities in outer suburbs commonly lag behind in transport, education and commercial supporting facilities and risk turning into single-functional "sleep towns". Most security-housing communities only satisfy basic accommodation needs, lacking development-oriented public spaces for co-working, entrepreneurship incubation and youth socializing, making it hard to realize the upgrade from "having a roof over one's head" to "living in comfort and decency" (Chen, et al., 2024). Furthermore, youth housing security involves multiple authorities including housing-urban-rural development, human resources and social security, education, public security and the Communist Youth League. Routine inter-departmental consultation, data-sharing and joint supervision mechanisms are imperfect. Housing-security planning is poorly linked with talent and industrial policies. The rights-and-responsibility relationship among municipal, district-level and sub-district authorities has not been rationalized, and grass-roots outreach capacity is insufficient, so policy dividends can hardly reach targeted youth groups accurately.

Facing the construction of youth-development-oriented cities during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, we shall follow the functional positioning of the capital and adhere to the principles of supply-demand matching, targeted tiered support, long-term institutional effectiveness, quality improvement and systematic collaboration to improve the youth housing security system in multiple dimensions. On the supply side, we shall further revitalize stock resources, refine the three-tier housing gradient of "one bed - one room - one apartment", adopt differentiated regional allocation, and increase the supply of dormitory-type and small-size units. Decentralized housing sources in core districts shall be tapped through reconstruction of non-residential buildings, collective-construction-land-based rental housing and urban renewal, so as to build a supply pattern guided by the government and with diversified market participation (Chen & Qi, 2025). For group-oriented security, eligibility criteria shall be reformed to weaken restrictions tied to

household registration and employers. A unified municipal online application platform shall be built to expand individual application channels. Distributed special accommodation beds shall be arranged for workers in new-forms of employment with flexible lease terms. Inter-policy connection shall be enhanced with mutual-recognition of qualifications and cross-district transfer mechanisms, so as to build a stepped housing-security chain covering the full life cycle of young people.

For institutional construction, quantitatively transparent dynamic adjustment formulas for security standards shall be formulated to realize automatic linkage of eligibility thresholds, rents and subsidies with economic indicators. The equal-rights-for-renting-and-purchasing-houses reform shall be advanced taking affordable rental housing as the breakthrough point. Government big-data interfaces across departments shall be connected, flexible gradient exit mechanisms shall be established, and digital full-cycle supervision shall be improved (Chen, 2026). In terms of spatial layout and quality improvement, employment-oriented housing-security allocation and the TOD model shall be promoted. The “three-simultaneous-requirements” (simultaneous planning, construction and delivery) for supporting facilities shall be strictly enforced. Youth-development-oriented communities shall be built with upgraded public spaces and youth-oriented services (Rao et al., 2026). Finally, an inter-departmental collaborative leadership framework shall be established, the rights and responsibilities of municipal-district-sub-district levels shall be clarified, linkage among industrial, talent and housing policies shall be strengthened, grass-roots services shall be extended, and joint governance forces shall be pooled.

Housing security is far more than solving young people’s accommodation problems. It constitutes a crucial institutional tool for megacities to retain human capital and stimulate urban vitality. Only by addressing multi-layered contradictions in supply, group coverage, institutions, supporting facilities and collaborative governance and constructing a youth housing-security system adapted to young people’s full-cycle development, can we achieve mutual empowerment between youth’s decent settlement and high-quality urban development, and provide referential practical experience for youth housing governance in other domestic megacities.

6. Conclusion

From the perspective of youth-development-oriented city construction, this paper comprehensively evaluates Beijing’s youth housing-security policies based on policy-text analysis and questionnaire survey data. The study finds that Beijing has initially built a multi-level youth housing-security system, with affordable rental housing as its core policy instrument. Nevertheless, prominent challenges remain including structural supply mismatch, coverage gaps for key groups, rigid institutions, insufficient livable quality and deficient inter-departmental coordination. Existing policies favor college graduates and officially recognized talents, while

flexible-employment workers and ordinary non-local youth may fall into security vacuums. A complete housing-support chain covering youth's job-hunting, employment and family-building stages has not yet been formed.

Responding to megacity governance demands in the 15th Five-Year-Plan period, Beijing shall implement comprehensive countermeasures from five dimensions: supply-side reform, precise tiered security, long-term institutional innovation, residential-quality improvement and collaborative-governance-system construction. It is necessary to optimize housing-unit types and spatial layout, break household-registration- and employer-dependent eligibility barriers, establish dynamically adjusted security standards together with flexible exit mechanisms, and strengthen inter-departmental coordination to facilitate the transition from "having a roof over one's head" to "living in comfort and decency". Improving youth housing security serves not only as a livelihood-enhancing measure, but also as a key instrument to gather youth human capital and boost urban vitality, which can offer practical references for similar megacities in China.

It should be noted that in recent years, Beijing has rolled out numerous policies for youth indemnified housing and implemented a suite of supporting projects, substantially alleviating housing difficulties among young residents. This study draws only on 132 questionnaire surveys. Given the limited coverage of the sample, certain findings may not precisely reflect reality and can only partially identify possible prominent issues in this regard.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix: Questionnaire Codebook

Survey Name: Capital Youth Housing Security Policy Survey

Survey Period: May 2026 - July 2026

Research Implementation Method: Sample recruitment was conducted through a combination of online and offline methods; online, questionnaires were distributed through university employment communities, youth job-seeking platforms, and internal enterprise communities; offline, questionnaires were distributed on the peripheries of universities and in youth-concentrated business districts in Haidian, Chaoyang, and Tongzhou districts. A total of 186 questionnaires were distributed, 154 were returned with answers, after excluding invalid questionnaires, 132 valid samples were obtained, with an effective response rate of 70.96%. Except for specially marked as multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions, all other questions were single-choice questions; except for the identity verification question Q1, which had one sample with incorrect filling of explanatory text, the effective sample size of this variable was 131. The denominator of the valid responses for all other questions was 132.

Q1 Identity Verification (Please select the option that best represents your current identity; Note: If you meet multiple identities, please choose the one you consider the most important) [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 131]

Options: A. Fresh Graduates (including undergraduate, master's, and doctoral graduates, who have not yet officially started employment or have less than one year of employment, aged 18 - 35); B. Young Talents (young professionals in technical, management, cultural, and financial fields who have been working in Beijing for more than one year, aged 18 - 35); C. New Employment Form Workers (flexible employment personnel such as ride-hailing drivers, delivery riders, couriers, online hosts, and domestic service workers, aged 18 - 35); D. Non-Beijing Residents (non-Beijing residents who have been working, studying, or residing in Beijing for more than 6 months, aged 18 - 35).

Q2 Your Gender [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Male, Female.

Q3 Your Age [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: 18 - 22 years old, 23 - 25 years old, 26 - 30 years old, 31 - 35 years old.

Q4 Your Current Highest Education Level [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: High school/secondary vocational school/technical school, college, undergraduate, postgraduate and above.

Q5 Your Arrival Time in Beijing [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Within 1 year, 1 - 3 years, 3 - 5 years, 5 - 10 years, 10 years or more.

Q6 Your Current Living Status [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Own Housing (including joint-ownership housing), University/School Dormitories, Rental Housing (shared), Rental Housing (single), Stay with Relatives, Others.

Q7 The Type of Your Current Residence [Single-choice question, valid sample

N = 132]

Options: Ordinary commercial housing, old residential areas, urban villages/urban-rural integration self-built houses, apartments/commercial housing, secure housing (public rental housing/affordable housing/joint-ownership housing, etc.), others (can fill in the content yourself).

Q8 The Proportion of Your Monthly Housing Expenses (including rent/mortgage, property management fees, heating fees, etc.) to Monthly Income [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Below 10%, 10% - 20%, 20% - 30%, 30% - 40%, 40% - 50%, Above 50%.

Q9 The One-way Commute Time from Your Current Residence to Your Work/Study Location [Single-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: within 30 minutes, 30 - 60 minutes, 1 - 1.5 hours, 1.5 - 2 hours, more than 2 hours.

Q10 Your housing plan for the next 3 years is [multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Continue renting, maintain the status quo, Change to a better house, Apply for subsidized housing, Purchase commercial housing, Leave Beijing/Return to hometown, Uncertain.

Q11 What are the most important housing factors for you [multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

The available options include: Rent/Housing price level, Commuting convenience, Surrounding facilities (education, healthcare, commerce), Living area and floor plan, Community environment and property management, Community safety, Neighbor structure and social atmosphere, Filing/Children's education policy connection, Others. The statistical for multiple-choice questions: The proportion of each option = the number of samples choosing that option ÷ total valid samples 132, and the sum of percentages of each option can be greater than 100%.

Q12 How do you think the current capital housing security policy covers you [multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Fully covered, have benefited; Basic coverage, have the opportunity to apply; Partial coverage, high threshold; Rare coverage, almost impossible to apply; Completely not covered, belong to the policy blind area. The synthetic indicator "fully/basic coverage" used in the cross-analysis of this questionnaire is generated by combining the two options "fully covered, have benefited" and "basic coverage, have the opportunity to apply".

Q13 How do you evaluate the convenience of the current application process (procedure, materials, review cycle) [multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Very convenient, relatively convenient, General, Relatively cumbersome, Very cumbersome, Not applicable (have not applied).

Q14 What do you think are the main problems of the current housing security policy [multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: High entry threshold (income, household registration, social security years, etc.), Insufficient housing supply, Long waiting time, Remote housing location, High commuting cost, Unreasonable floor plan (too large/too small), Housing price/selling price still exceed affordability, Incomplete facilities, Inadequate policy publicity, Information asymmetry, Complex application process, Inflexible exit mechanism, Others. The statistical for multiple-choice questions: The proportion of each option = the number of samples choosing that option ÷ total valid samples 132, and the sum of percentages of each option can be greater than 100%.

Q15 Whether the housing security standard should be dynamically linked to the following factors, including 5 independent sub-questions, all using the same set of five-level Likert single-choice options, all valid samples are $N = 132$. The sub-questions are Q15a Family population structure, Q15b Income level, Q15c Employment stability, Q15d Residence years, Q15e Regional development differences; Unified option: Very necessary, relatively necessary, Unimportant, Not very necessary, Very not necessary.

Q16 How is your intention to stay in Beijing after graduation [multiple-choice question, valid sample $N = 132$]

Options: Very want to stay in Beijing, relatively want to stay in Beijing, depending on housing/employment situation, not want to stay in Beijing, definitely leave Beijing.

Q17 The degree to which housing cost affects your decision to stay in Beijing [multiple-choice question, valid sample $N = 132$]

Options: Decisive factor, Important influencing factor, General influencing factor, Little influence.

Q18 Have you understood Beijing's housing security policy for graduates (such as job-seeking short-term rental apartments, rental subsidies, etc.) [multiple-choice question, valid sample $N = 132$]

Options: Very well understood, have applied or plan to apply; Have some understanding, but do not meet the conditions; Heard of it, but do not know the details; Completely do not understand.

Q19 Does your workplace provide housing support (such as employee dormitories, rental subsidies, purchase subsidies, etc.)? [Multiple-choice question, valid sample $N = 132$]

Options: Yes, with significant support; Yes, with limited support; No, but hope to have; No, and not needed.

Q20 How does the housing security policy affect your career choice and loyalty to the workplace? [Multiple-choice question, valid sample $N = 132$]

Options: Has a significant impact, is an important consideration for staying or leaving; Has some impact; Has a minor impact; Has no impact.

Q21 Do you think the housing for talents and affordable rental housing should be integrated in management? [Multiple-choice question, valid sample $N = 132$]

Options: Should be completely integrated and apply for it uniformly; Can be partially integrated and managed separately; Keep independent and avoid re-

source encroachment; Not sure.

Q22 Your employment form is [Multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Direct employment by the platform, labor dispatching, part-time/gig work, individual business owner/self-employed.

Q23 The main obstacles you encountered when applying for housing assistance are [Multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

The available options include: unstable income, difficult to prove; no fixed workplace, irregular social security payment; census register restrictions; high mobility of work, not meeting the residence period requirements; lack of understanding of policies or application procedures; others. The statistical of the multiple-choice question: The proportion of each option = The number of samples choosing that option ÷ Total valid samples 132, and the sum of percentages of each option can be greater than 100%.

Q24 Which housing support method do you prefer [Multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Housing nearby the workplace, rental monetary subsidy (directly giving money), low-rent collective dormitory/blue-collar apartment, flexible lease period short-term rental housing, others.

Q25 Your current situation of the residence permit/work residence permit is [Multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Obtained work residence permit (green card), obtained ordinary residence permit, in the process of application, not applied.

Q26 The degree of influence of the household registration factor on your enjoyment of housing assistance [Multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Decisive obstacle, completely unable to apply; significant obstacle, many restrictions; has some influence, but can apply for some projects; less influence; no influence.

Q27 If the household registration restrictions are relaxed but require longer social security years, do you support [Multiple-choice question, valid sample N = 132]

Options: Very supportive, relatively supportive, neutral, not supportive (should be treated equally).

Q28 Please use 1 - 3 keywords to describe your ideal youth housing in the capital [Open question, valid sample N = 132], set 3 blank input boxes, respondents fill in the keywords themselves, for word frequency statistics.

Q29 What specific suggestions do you have for improving the housing assistance policy for young people in the capital [Open question, valid sample N = 132], respondents freely input text, for qualitative inductive analysis.

Q30 Thank you very much for your patience in filling out! If you are willing to participate in the subsequent in-depth interview, please leave your contact information [Voluntary open question, valid sample N = 132], leaving blank means not willing to participate in the subsequent interview; this information is only used for interview invitation, not included in the statistical analysis.