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Title:
Housing aspirations of young Australians, 1977-1997: a constructed cohort approach

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Abstract:
Since the mid 1970s, Australia's aggregate home ownership rate has remained at a stable 68 per cent of households, a figure underpinned by the ageing of the population. During the same period, however, the proportion of Australians aged 25-34 in home ownership has declined about ten percentage points, from approximately 60 to 50 per cent of this age group. This drop reflects a number of social and demographic shifts including delayed age of marriage and parenthood, longer spells in higher education, as well as fundamental restructuring in the nature of work. Another possible explanation, frequently mentioned, but little studied, is that aspirations for home ownership may have changed. This paper therefore investigates whether the aspirations for home ownership have changed among different cohorts of 25-34 year old housing consumers. This paper analyses the attitudes expressed about home ownership by successive cohorts of 25 to 34 year olds between 1977 and 1997. The birth cohorts range from the earliest 1943-1947 cohort interviewed in 1977 to the 1968-1972 cohort interviewed in 1997. The cohorts examined in this paper were entering the home purchase market in the late 1970s, mid 1980s, early 1990s and late 1990s, all of which represent different social and economic climates for home purchase. The analysis draws upon six different social surveys (available either through ACSPRI or ABS) that specifically asked respondents their view on the importance of home ownership or their expectation of purchasing. The results show that expectations declined from the late 1970s through to the early 1990s and the reported importance of ownership declined during the 1990s, particularly among Generation Xers. Some methodological issues involved with linking information from different surveys are discussed as well as the implications of diminishing home ownership on housing policy.