

The Effects of Rent Control Expansion on Tenants, Landlords, and Inequality: Evidence from San Francisco*

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Abstract

Using a 1994 law change, we exploit quasi-experimental variation in the assignment of rent control in San Francisco to study its impacts on tenants and landlords. Leveraging new data tracking individuals' migration, we find rent control limits renters' mobility by 20% and lowers displacement from San Francisco. Landlords treated by rent control reduce rental housing supplies by 15% by selling to owner-occupants and redeveloping buildings. Thus, while rent control prevents displacement of incumbent renters in the short run, the lost rental housing supply likely drove up market rents in the long run, ultimately undermining the goals of the law.

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