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Predicting abandoned housing: does the operational definition of abandonment matter?

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Abstract

“Abandonment” is a term that has no agreed-upon definition in the housing literature. As a result, different measures of housing abandonment have been used by researchers and practitioners. However, it is not clear whether the various measures capture the same construct. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to test whether three operational definitions of housing abandonment (tax delinquency as a proxy for abandonment, abandonment as identified by foot survey, and abandonment defined as “other vacant” by the census bureau) produce different results when used in prediction models. The study finds that the statistically significant predictors vary substantially from model to model. This finding is important to researchers and policy-makers since it indicates that proxies of housing abandonment are likely not equivalent, and that it may be necessary to conduct foot surveys in order to capture the intended construct.

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