

'Lucky' numbers drive home sales

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The difference in selling price between homes with "lucky" and "unlucky" street numbers could be as much as \$20,000 in cities with large Chinese populations, according to a new study.

Economists at the University of B.C. discovered that homes whose street numbers end with the auspicious number eight sell for 2.5 per cent more than the average house. Those ending in the less favourable number four sell for about 2.2 per cent less.

"Our study suggests these numbers are significant to enough people in these areas that there is a corresponding impact on real estate prices," researcher Jeff Huang said.

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The undergraduate economics student, a native of Taiwan, says that the number four sounds similar to the word for "death" in many Chinese dialects, while the number eight sounds like "prosperity."

But Huang cautions against broad generalizations: "Obviously, there will be differences from person to person. For example, these beliefs may be stronger for recent immigrants than people whose families have lived in North America for generations."

The [study](#) traced 117,000 home sales in Metro Vancouver cities with more than 18 per cent ethnic Chinese residents, including Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby and Coquitlam.

With an average house price of \$400,000, people were willing to pay as much as \$10,000 more for an auspicious street number -- but can expect to receive about an equal discount for less desirable digits.

Lead researcher Nicole Fortin says the results prove that superstition can play a major role in real estate decisions.

"The address of your house can be more of a selling feature in some markets," she said.

According to the research paper, people don't need to be superstitious to prefer lucky homes.

"Some buyers of auspicious house numbers may believe in the 'magic' of the numbers, but others may simply enjoy the associated Veblen or status effects, gaining bragging rights or favourable treatment from family, friends, and clients," the researchers say.

The researchers liken ethnic Chinese distaste for the number four to Western fears about the number 13.

In Las Vegas, where luck is particularly important many large casinos omit floor numbers 4, 14, 24, 34 -- and

every single digit in the 40s.

The researchers also point out that many people who buy houses with street numbers ending in the dreaded four will petition the city to change their addresses to include luckier digits.

In Richmond, where more than 50 per cent of the population is ethnic Chinese, the city charges about \$1,000 for an address change.

But the city tries to limit street address changes to people with practical concerns like property subdivisions.

According to the city's [website](#), "Address changes as a result of a personal preference on the part of the property owner are discouraged for any other reason, i.e. superstition and religious beliefs, numerology, etc."

Richmond spokeswoman Cynthia Lockrey says the planning department gets "a number of requests" for address changes.

"If we allowed it, it would all be eights," she told CTV News.

PHOTOS



UBC researchers have found that houses with street numbers ending in an eight sell for more money in cities with large ethnic Chinese populations. Nov. 26, 2010. (CTV)