State management of residence in the context of two-tier local government

Dr. Cao Thi Dzung
Academy of Journalism and Communication

Abstract: In the context of accelerating the national digital transformation and the requirement to enhance the effectiveness of social governance while reorganizing local government under the two-tier model from July 1, 2025, state management of residence plays a pivotal role in ensuring security and public order, improving the quality of public service delivery, and supporting development policy formulation. Residence management can only achieve real effectiveness when it is organized in a synchronized, modern manner, based on a unified digital data platform and close coordination across different levels and sectors. This constitutes an essential condition for effectively controlling population mobility, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of state management, and building a transparent, professional administration oriented toward sustainable development. On this basis, the article analyzes the current situation and proposes solutions to strengthen the state management of residence in Vietnam.

Keywords: State management; residence; state management of residence; Vietnam.

1. Introduction

State management of residence is a critical domain of national governance, as residence information not only reflects the size, structure, and distribution of the population but also serves as a direct basis for policy formulation, resource allocation, and assurance of security and social order. In the context of accelerating national digital transformation and comprehensive administrative reform, the requirement to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of residence management has become increasingly urgent. Notably, Vietnam has, since July 1, 2025, implemented a reorganization of administrative units and a restructuring of local government under a two-tier model, resulting in fundamental changes to administrative boundaries, management structures, and decentralization arrangements (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2025). These changes directly affect residence management, requiring review, updating, and synchronization of population data in accordance with newly established

administrative units to ensure accuracy, communication, and timeliness in management.

At the same time, the promulgation of the 2020 Law on Residence, the termination of paper-based household registration books and temporary residence books, and the deployment of the National Population Database together with the VNeID electronic identification system have marked an important shift from traditional residence management to data-based governance (Ministry of Public Security, 2022). However, practical implementation has revealed several difficulties, including disparities in technological infrastructure among localities, uneven digital capacity of implementing personnel, incomplete integration of residence data, and emerging challenges in adjusting residence information following the merger and reorganization of administrative units.

Only when state management of residence is organized in a unified manner, grounded in a transparent digital data platform, standardized professional procedures, and effective coordination mechanisms among agencies within the two-tier local government model, can the protection of citizens' residence rights, the enhancement of management effectiveness, and the modernization of the national administrative system be fully achieved. On this basis, this article analyzes the current situation, identifies emerging challenges, and proposes orientations for improving the state management of residence in Vietnam in the present context.

2. Concepts, characteristics, and role of residence and state management of residence in the context of digital transformation

In legal science, residence is first approached as a social phenomenon, reflecting the objective relationship between an individual and a specific place of living within the national territory. At this level, residence is associated with fundamental human needs for housing, employment, education, and mobility; at the same time, it is influenced by socio-economic factors such as urbanization, population distribution, and labor market development.

On that basis, residence is codified and developed into a legal institution, comprising a system of legal norms regulating the establishment, modification, and recognition of citizens' place of residence. Under the 2020 Law on Residence (as amended in 2021 and 2023) (Ministry of Public Security, 2021), residence is understood as the act of a citizen living at a location within a specific administrative unit that is recorded by a competent state authority through permanent residence registration, temporary residence registration, or electronic management methods within the National Population Database. The codification of residence aims to ensure citizens' freedom of residence while providing a legal foundation for the exercise of related rights, obligations, and social policies.

At the level of public administration, residence becomes a direct object of management through activities of registration, updating, and monitoring changes in residence status. In the context of digital transformation, residence is no longer managed primarily through paper-based records but is recorded, authenticated, and used on digital data platforms linked to personal identification and a unified population database. With its dual nature - both a natural element of social life and an integral component of the legal and administrative order - residence plays a foundational role in social governance, protection of human rights, and enhancement of state management effectiveness.

In terms of characteristics, residence possesses relative stability, as each individual

is typically associated with a specific place of living for a certain period, during which they exercise civil rights and obligations and access social policies. This stability provides the State with the basis to manage the population, allocate public resources, plan infrastructure, and deliver services according to administrative territories. In the current socio-economic context, however, residence is also highly mobile due to labor migration, urbanization, and expansion of transport and urban spaces. The mix of stability and mobility has revealed limitations of the traditional residence management model, which focuses primarily on managing a "static residence" within fixed administrative boundaries, leading to data lag and difficulty in keeping pace with actual population fluctuations.

To meet the dual requirements of maintaining management stability while adapting to flexible residence patterns, current residence management needs to shift toward a human-centered approach, linked to personal identification and digital data. Instead of managing primarily through residential address, the State should manage individuals based on their mobility patterns and residence status, thereby enhancing its capacity to monitor demographic changes, allocate resources rationally, and improve social governance efficiency.

Residence is also legally mandatory, as establishing residence directly relates to voting rights, access to education and healthcare, business registration, military service, and many other areas. The abolition of paper-based household registration and temporary residence books, and the transition to digital data management since 2023 have both fundamentally transformed the way residence management is conducted, while also generating new requirements for technological infrastructure, cybersecurity, and data communication.

Another important characteristic is that residence is closely linked to the organization of the administrative apparatus and territorial boundaries. When the State adjusts administrative units or changes the local government model - such as the implementation of the two-tier local government model from July 1, 2025 - the residence system must be promptly updated to ensure the legality and consistency of population information. This demonstrates that residence management cannot be separated from institutional reform, decentralization, and national digital transformation.

In terms of role, state management of residence serves as an important instrument to ensure citizens' freedom of residence, support the formulation of development policies, budget allocation, infrastructure planning, and public service delivery. At the same time, it plays a key role in ensuring public security and order, and in managing population fluctuations. In the context of digital transformation and the reorganization of local government under the two-tier model, residence management is increasingly becoming a pillar of modern social governance, requiring a holistic approach grounded in consistent legal and data frameworks.

3. Current situation of state management of residence in Vietnam

In recent years, state management of residence in Vietnam has undergone fundamental changes, particularly since the 2020 Law on Residence took effect, paper-based household registration books were abolished, and residence management was transitioned to a digital data platform. This process has been further accelerated by the reorganization of administrative units and the restructuring of local government under the two-tier model, effective from July 1, 2025.

Alongside notable achievements, residence management is in practice also facing new requirements arising from the expanded scope of management and changes in the administrative structure.

3.1. Achievements

First, residence data have been gradually digitized, standardized, and synchronized nationwide. The development and operation of the National Population Database, connected to the VNeID application and online public service platforms, have established a core digital infrastructure for modern residence management (Binh, 2025). The unified personal identification system enables large-scale verification of residence information, enhancing data reliability and integrity. In the context of administrative mergers and boundary adjustments in 2025, digital residence data plays a particularly important role in addressing fragmentation and duplication of information across localities before and after the reorganization, thereby creating a unified "digital population map" to effectively support state management and policy formulation.

Second, residence-related procedures and services have been simplified, thus becoming more convenient for citizens. The abolition of paper-based household and temporary residence books and the implementation of electronic residence procedures have both fundamentally transformed the delivery of administrative services in this field. Such procedures as permanent residence registration, temporary residence registration, declaration of temporary stay, and adjustment of residence information have been standardized and are primarily conducted through the Public Service Portal and the VNeID application. Residence registration authorities proactively leverage existing data in the National Population Database, reducing the need for citizens to repeatedly provide information, thereby reducing processing time, lowering social costs, and enhancing the transparency and professionalism of the administrative system.

Third, the effectiveness of managing population mobility and ensuring security and public order has improved. Data-based residence management enables the State to shift from a passive model to a more proactive, continuous and accurate management approach. Changes related to migration, temporary residence, temporary stay, and temporary absence are updated in real time, allowing competent authorities to promptly detect unusual fluctuations and adopt appropriate management measures. In the context of larger population areas following administrative mergers, residence management linked to a unique personal identification number ensures the continuity of information while effectively supporting crime prevention and maintaining security and public order.

Fourth, residence management has become a foundational data infrastructure for digital transformation and comprehensive public service delivery. Residence data are no longer confined merely to population management but have become a central component of the digital government architecture (Government, 2023). Through VNeID and interoperable systems, residence information is connected with healthcare, insurance, education, taxation, social security, and many other sectors (Khang, 2025), enabling citizens to use a unified "digital identity" when accessing public services. This reduces paperwork, improves the efficiency of information verification, and provides a reliable data foundation for socio-economic development policy planning (Tuyen, 2025).

Fifth, the grassroots-level apparatus for residence management has been strengthened in line with the two-tier local government

model. The abolition of the district-level and the reorganization of local government under a two-tier structure have created conditions for clearer restructuring of residence management authority between the provincial and commune levels. Accordingly, the commune level directly manages registration and updates of citizens' residence information, while the provincial level assumes responsibility for supervision, aggregation, and data standardization (Vietnam News Agency, 2025). This decentralization mechanism reduces intermediary layers, limits overlapping responsibilities, and enhances management coherence (Vietnam News Agency, 2025). At the same time, the digital capacity of grassroots officials has been gradually improved through training and capacity-building activities, contributing to the effective operation of the digital residence management system amid expandsion of population size and administrative jurisdiction (Vietnam News Agency, 2025).

3.2. Some limitations

First, the technological infrastructure and implementation capacity at the grassroots level remain limited, thereby reducing the effectiveness of digitizing residence data. Although the National Population Database has been deployed nationwide, in many localities - particularly at the commune level - technological infrastructure has not yet met the requirements of digital residence management. Dated equipment, unstable internet connections, and insufficient specialized devices have all resulted in slow, inconsistent data entry, updating, and utilization of residence information (Lam, 2025). In the context of administrative mergers and expanded management territories, these shortcomings increase data lags, cause information errors, and directly affect the effectiveness of residence management,

especially regarding temporary residence, temporary stay, and population mobility.

Second, the current coexistence of electronic procedures and paper-based records might undermine the effectiveness of administrative reform. Although the law has established the principle of residence management based on digital data and electronic identification, many agencies still, in practice, require citizens to present hard-copy documents for residence-related procedures. This largely stems from risk-averse attitudes, limited trust in digital data, and uneven capacity to utilize systems among implementing officials (Lam, 2025). Maintaining parallel management methods not only diminishes the benefits of digital transformation but also creates inconvenience for citizens, thereby eroding public trust in administrative reform in the field of residence management.

Third, communication and data sharing among different systems remain incomplete. Current residence management is influenced by multiple related data systems, such as civil status, land administration, immigration, healthcare, and social security databases. However, data connectivity and standardization across these systems still exhibit certain discrepancies, particularly during periods of administrative boundary adjustment (Vietnam National Statistics Office, 2025). As a result, a number of citizens are required to verify and update their residence information following administrative mergers, which increases the risk of data duplication and inconsistency and increases administrative costs. This constitutes a major obstacle to the goal of building a unified, comprehensive, and reliable population database.

Fourth, there is a growing risk of a digital divide and inequality in access to residence-related services. Digital residence

management requires citizens to possess technological devices, digital skills, and internet connectivity. In practice, however, elderly individuals, rural residents, people in remote and disadvantaged areas, and vulnerable groups all often face difficulties in using electronic identification applications and online public services. Limited technological proficiency compels them to continue relying on traditional paper-based methods, thereby reducing their ability to fully benefit from digital residence management (Trung, 2025). This poses significant challenges to inclusiveness and equity in residence governance if appropriate support measures are not put in place.

4. Solutions to strengthen state management of residence in Vietnam in the coming period

Based on the analysis of the current situation and existing limitations, strengthening state management of residence in the coming period should be implemented in a consistent and modern manner, aligned with the two-tier local government model. In particular, attention should focus on four main groups of solutions.

First, improving the institutional and legal framework for residence in conformity with the two-tier local government model. In the context of reorganizing local government under a two-tier structure, it is essential to refine the legal framework to ensure unified, transparent, and effective residence management. The current legal system needs to be comprehensively reviewed to address overlaps and inconsistencies among the Law on Residence, the Law on Organization of Local Government, the Law on Personal Data Protection, and related implementing regulations.

The core of institutional reform is to clearly define the responsibilities and authority of provincial- and commune-level governments in registering, updating, verifying, and managing residence changes; to establish interoperable coordination mechanisms between authorities of residence management and those of civil status, land administration, immigration, insurance, and social security agencies; and, to develop a unified national data standard system. The law should also provide a clear legal corridor for fully digital residence management, affirm the legal validity of residence data, stipulate timely responsibilities for updating, and impose sanctions for violations, thereby ensuring citizens' freedom of residence in line with the requirements of modern social governance.

Second, upgrading digital infrastructure, improving the National Population Database, and enhancing data communication. Modern residence management can only be effective when built upon consistent, stable, and interconnected digital infrastructure. In the coming period, further investment is required to upgrade the National Population Database by enhancing large-scale data storage and processing capacity and ensuring information safety and cybersecurity; and, at the same time, connectivity should be expanded to sectoral databases such as healthcare, education, insurance, justice, immigration, and land administration.

Particular priority should be given to technological infrastructure at the commune level, which is directly responsible for residence registration and management, to ensure adequate equipment, stable internet connectivity, and unified professional software following administrative mergers. In parallel, the role of VNeID should be expanded as a unified identification hub, enabling full implementation of residence procedures in digital environment and minimizing reliance on traditional paper documents. The development and application of national residence data standards will be a key solution

to overcome data fragmentation and duplication, shifting from a "record-based management" model to a "mobility-based management" model, thereby enhancing forecasting capacity and policy planning.

Third, strengthening officials' capacity and building a data-driven culture of residence management. Officials responsible for residence management, particularly at the grassroots level, play a decisive role in operating the population data system. Therefore, specialized and continuous training programs should be implemented to enhance digital skills, data security awareness, professional expertise in residence management within the two-tier government model, and data analysis and utilization capabilities.

In addition to professional capacity building, a public service culture in residence management should be fostered to be grounded in principles of accuracy in data collection and verification, transparency in procedural handling, and accountability in protecting citizens' personal data rights. Performance evaluation and incentives for officials should be linked to data-based indicators such as the rate of online dossier processing, timeliness of updating residence changes, data quality, and processing time. At the same time, inspection, supervision, and strict handling of abuse or unauthorized interference in residence data should be strengthened to ensure the integrity of the management system.

Fourth, ensuring social inclusiveness and strengthening support for citizens in using digital residence services. Data-based residence management can only be truly effective when all population groups can access and use it. Therefore, practical support measures should be implemented for the elderly, rural residents, people in remote and disadvantaged areas, and vulnerable groups in order to narrow the digital divide.

Priority should be given to developing on-site support models such as community technology teams and VNeID support points at the grassroots level; and, at the same time, application interfaces and residence service portals should be improved to become more user-friendly and accessible. During the transition period, direct in-person reception should continue in parallel with online services in a streamlined manner, while assisting citizens in creating and using electronic identification accounts at one-stop shops. In addition, enhanced communication on residence policies and personal data protection will raise awareness, foster social consensus, and encourage citizens' proactive cooperation in residence management.

5. Conclusion

State management of residence in Vietnam is entering a phase of profound transformation amid accelerated national digital transformation and the implementation of the two-tier local government model from July 1, 2025. Recent practice has demonstrated initial positive outcomes: residence data have become increasingly consistent; administrative procedures have been simplified; public services have become more convenient; and, the capacity to monitor population mobility and support policy formulation has gradually improved. These developments affirm that the shift from a traditional residence management model to data-based governance is both appropriate and necessary.

However, the reform of residence management continues to face significant challenges, including uneven data quality and consistency, disparities in infrastructure and implementation capacity across localities, and the risk of widening the digital divide for certain population groups. These limitations indicate that residence management is not merely a technical or technological issue but is

closely linked to institutional frameworks, organizational structures, and human capacity.

In the coming period, strengthening state management of residence should be implemented in a consistent manner, with a focus on improving the legal framework in alignment with the two-tier government model; investing in and upgrading data infrastructure and electronic identification systems; enhancing the capacity and accountability of implementing officials; and, ensuring social inclusiveness in access to digital residence services. Effective implementation of these orientations will contribute to building a modern, transparent and efficient residence management system, thereby improving the quality of national governance, better safeguarding citizens' rights, and establishing a solid foundation for socio-economic development in the new phase.

References:

1. Binh, T. (2025). *More than 132 million records authenticated through chip-based citizen identification cards and VNeID.* Lao Dong Online. Retrieved from https://news.laodong.vn/kinh-doanh/hon-132-trieu-ho-so-duoc-xac-thuc-qua-can-cuoc-cong-dan-gan-chip-va-vneid-1600334.ldo

2. Ministry of Public Security. (2021). *Law on Residence 2020 and guiding documents for implementation.* People's Public Security Publishing House.

3. Ministry of Public Security. (2022). *Report on the implementation of the National Population Database and the electronic identification and authentication system.* People's Public Security Publishing House.

4. Ministry of Home Affairs. (2025). *Comprehensive report on the two-tier local government model and its impact on population management after administrative mergers.* Statistics Publishing House.

5. Government. (2023). *National Digital Transformation Report 2022.* Government Office.

6. Hoa, N. M. (2024). *Local government organization in the context of administrative unit rearrangement: Issues and implications.* National Political Truth Publishing House.

7. Khang, T. (2025). *VNeID - From a health declaration application to the "digital key" of every citizen.* VietNamNet. Retrieved from https://vietnamnet.vn/vneid-tu-ung-dung-khai-bao-y-te-den-chia-khoa-so-cua-moi-nguoi-dan-2469375.html

8. Lam, D. (2025). *Paper forms still required despite electronic population database.* VietNamNet. Retrieved from https://vietnamnet.vn/en/paper-forms-still-required-despite-electronic-population-database-2441399.html

9. Tuyen, M. (2025). *The rate of fully online public services nationwide reaches 48.84% of total administrative procedures.* Communist Review Online. Retrieved from https://tcnnld.vn/news/detail/67819

10. Vietnam News Agency. (2025). *Two-tier government model promises sweeping changes in Ho Chi Minh City.* Sai Gon Giai Phong Online. Retrieved from https://en.sggp.org.vn/two-tier-government-model-promises-sweeping-changes-in-hcmc-post118262.html

11. Vietnam News Agency. (2025). *Vietnam launches two-tier local government model.* VietnamPlus. Retrieved from https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-launches-two-tier-local-government-model-post323321.vnp

12. Vietnam National Statistics Office. (2025). *Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) report.* Retrieved from https://www.nso.gov.vn/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Bao-cao-CRVS-edited-ENG-Full.pdf

13. Vietnam News Agency. (2025). *Summary of the rearrangement of administrative units at all levels before September 20, 2025.* Retrieved from https://portal.ttxvn.gov.vn/vn/tin-tuc/11280/tong-ket-viec-sap-xep-don-vi-hanh-chinh-cac-cap-truoc-ngay-20-9-2025.aspx