



## Homeless Population in India : A Study

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P. G. Centre, Kolar**ABSTRACT**

*It is remarkable that so little is known about the causes and conditions of homelessness in towns and cities in India: how urban homeless people survive and cope, how they sleep, bathe and eat, why they live on the streets, the work they do, their access or otherwise to public services and food schemes, and how they organise and plan their personal and social lives and relationships. This neglect encompasses not just official studies, but even studies by economists, sociologists, anthropologists, nutritionists and development students.*

*The urban poor, especially the homeless, lack a formal address. They are rendered anonymous because they usually lack the markers of citizenship of even poor people in India, such as ration cards and voters' identity cards. Government estimations of their population are, therefore, likely to be gross underestimates.*

**KEYWORDS : Homeless population in India, comparative data, analysis, conclusion****INTRODUCTION;**

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target for the nation – every Indian must have a house by 2022. He urged this to be a movement during his speech in the Lok Sabha following the President's address when the newly constituted house met for the first time. This means that India needs 449,761 houses for homeless families. (According to India's 2011 Census there are 449,761 homeless households/families). So there is a need to build about 55,000-60,000 houses each year to give shelter to all of them by 2022. Bear in mind that the worrying part is the rise in urban homes, which has grown at 20% in the decade from 2001 to 2011.

In India, urban poverty is "so real" with millions of homeless people squandering at almost every corner of its cities. They generally occupy any vacant space i.e., roadsides, pavements, temple-mandaps, and platforms as temporary abode while, ascribed their condition to extreme poverty, unavailability of low cost housing, unstable employment, and violence instituted at home. Street children, beggars, sex workers, and daily wage earners such as construction workers, rickshaw pullers, and street vendors basically are among the homeless in India.

**Here's a quick reference Fact Check on India's homeless population from the Census 2011 data to analyse the problem.**

**Total Population, 2001 & 2011****Table-1**  
**2001**

India	1,02,86,10,328
Rural	74,23,02,537
Urban	28,63,07,791

**Table-2**  
**2011**

India	1,21,05,69,573
Rural	83,34,63,448
Urban	37,71,06,125

Homeless or houseless are defined as- those who live in "the open or roadside, pavements, in hume-pipes, under fly-overs and staircases, or in the open in places of worship, mandaps, railway platforms etc." By this definition, only 0.14% of India or 1.7 million people are homeless.

The good news is that there has been an overall decline in the houseless population from the last Census. While there has been a 28% decline reported from rural India, there has been a 20% increase in houseless people living in the cities.

**India's houseless population in 2001 and 2011 data to analyse the problem.****Table-3**  
**2001**

India	19,43,476
Rural	11,64,877
Urban	7,78,599

**Table-4**  
**2011**

India	17,72,889
Rural	8,34,541
Urban	9,38,348

**Top 5 Cities of India In Terms of Urban Houseless People;**  
**Table-5**

Greater Mumbai	95,755
Delhi	46,724
Kolkata	69,798
Chennai	16,682
Bangalore	16,531
Total	2,45,490

Of the top five metros, Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi have a major problem of lack of houses. Obviously, the larger the population, the more will be the number of homeless people. Despite being centres of growth, infrastructure and opportunities, these cities are unable to provide shelter/housing to all people who live in them. And as many know, urbanisation in India is characterized by more and more people migrating towards the cities. And the biggest of cities may not be equipped to house them.

Compared to the total expenditure of the ministry, expenditure for housing has been limited. While there are schemes such as interest subsidy for housing the urban poor, the number of houseless people in cities has been growing.

A little more than a fourth (26%) of the houseless population in urban India lives in the top five metros. And 0.37% of the population in these urban agglomerations is houseless. This is proportionally much higher to the national average. The question worth asking here is – how are there more houseless people in the most developed regions of India?

The new Government had proposed in its election manifesto to develop urban areas as "high growth centres". It also talks about building 100 new cities. Further, it says that the Government will take major steps towards transport and housing in urban India. Past efforts by the urban development ministry have not shown much impact. The ministry has been renamed Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation under the new Government, which is in sync with the manifesto promises. We probably need to wait for the Union Budget on July 10, 2014 to see how the new Government proposes to tackle this challenge.

### CONCLUSION;

It is evident that the circumstances that lead individuals and households into homelessness are increasingly prevalent world-wide and there is no easing in the task of re-integrating homeless people into mainstream society. In high-income industrial countries, the poverty and isolation of homeless people are at odds with the wealth and prosperity of society as a whole. In developing countries, rapid urbanisation, the urbanisation of poverty, structural adjustment programmes, some disintegration of traditional family links, poor life chances in rural areas, and many other stresses, are compounding to introduce homelessness for the first time, particularly among young people.

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