



RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOMELESS POPULATION IN INDIA AND ITS STATES: PATTERN AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the patterns and structural dynamics of homelessness across India, highlighting socio-demographic variations and determinants based on Census 2011 data. Homelessness, characterized by the absence of adequate shelter and privacy, disproportionately affects urban areas, with 53% of the homeless population residing in cities. The analysis reveals significant gender disparities, with males comprising 59% of the homeless, often linked to migration for work, while women face unique vulnerabilities. Illiteracy is prevalent, with 67% of the homeless population lacking education, and caste analysis shows over 70% belong to non-SC/ST groups. Employment patterns indicate that 52% of the homeless are engaged in work, primarily as casual laborers, while non-working rates are higher in rural areas. States like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan report the highest homelessness, whereas northeastern states have lower proportions. Urban migration, limited affordable housing, and socio-economic disparities emerge as key drivers of homelessness. Regression analysis highlights significant associations with urbanization, illiteracy, and working status. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions, including expanded affordable housing schemes, vocational training, and gender-sensitive policies, to address homelessness effectively. These findings underscore the urgency of creating inclusive, sustainable housing solutions to mitigate homelessness and its socio-economic impacts in India.

KEYWORDS

socio-demographic, unique vulnerabilities, highest homelessness, Employment

1. INTRODUCTION

A home is a fundamental human need for a healthy and fulfilling life. It encompasses more than just a physical shelter; it represents security, privacy, comfort, and a sense of identity. According to a study, the concept of "home" refers to a place where individuals can form meaningful social connections, either by inviting others into their personal space or by retreating from such interactions when needed (Cooper, 1995).

In essence, a home should be a space where a person can claim ownership, where they have control over its appearance, organization, and the activities within it. This control allows individuals to define their own boundaries, such as determining who has access to their space. When a person has the ability to control and shape their environment in this way, they create a home that reflects their sense of self and personal identity. According to the National Human Rights Commission of India, based on estimates from the United Nations, around 100 million people, or a quarter of the world's population, live without shelter or in unhealthy, unacceptable conditions (National Human Rights Commission of India, 2011; United Nations, 2005).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homelessness is described as a state of disconnection from society, marked by the lack or weakening of the social bonds that tie individuals to established social structures (Glasser, 1994). While homelessness represents a lack of privacy and displacement for both men and women, it tends to manifest differently between the genders. For men, it is often linked to the absence of property, whereas for women, it typically involves the disruption of daily routines. This suggests that homelessness may be a more severe issue for women than for men (Somerville, 1992). Some

researcher argues that since the 1990s, urban development projects aimed at beautification and creating slum-free cities have led to the demolition of poor or unauthorized settlements and forced evictions, further exacerbating homelessness (Dupton, 2011a).

According to the Census of India, "homeless" individuals do not live in "census houses," defined as structures with roofs. People living in the open, such as on roadsides, pavements, under flyovers, at places of worship, or on railway platforms, are classified as homeless. The 12th Five-Year Plan estimated a housing shortage of 18.78 million units, with 96% of the shortfall affecting economically weaker sections (EWS) and low-income groups (LIG). Urban areas, especially those inhabited by the poor, face severe limitations in basic services such as clean water, drainage, sewerage, sanitation, electricity, roads, and waste management (MHUPA, 2012). A group researcher highlight in their longitudinal study that homelessness significantly impacts both physical and mental health, combining residential instability with high levels of illness (Bella et al., 2007).

As per the 2011 census, India's urban population was 377.1 million, representing 31.16% of the total population of 1.2 billion. The growing number of slum dwellers puts immense pressure on urban infrastructure and basic services. The supply of land for housing has not kept pace with urban population growth, leading to a lack of access to basic services, poor housing conditions, slum expansion, and widespread poverty (MHUPA, 2012-13).

2.1 Rationale for the Study

According to the 2011 Census, India is the second most populous country globally, with a significant proportion of its population still facing

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homelessness. Despite achieving independence over six decades ago, over 1.77 million people in India remain without adequate housing. The country's poverty levels have witnessed some decline, with rural poverty falling from 39.6% in 2009-10 to 30.9% in 2011-12, and urban poverty decreasing from 35.1% to 26.4% during the same period (Government of India Planning Commission, 2014). However, a report by the Research for Social and Economic Development reveals that half of India's population still lacks proper shelter, and a staggering 70% do not have access to basic toilet facilities (Research for Social and Economic Development, 2011). The absence of proper sanitation facilities is linked to the spread of disease, further compounding the challenges faced by the homeless. Additionally, 35% of individuals do not have access to nearby water sources, and 85% of rural areas lack secondary schools.

Reducing poverty and improving basic amenities- such as shelter, water, food, and sanitation- remain central challenges in India's development. Despite the overall decrease in the proportion of homeless individuals, from 0.19% of the population in 2001 to 0.15% in 2011, the urban homeless population is steadily increasing, indicating an emerging urban crisis (Census of India, 2011). This raises critical questions about the underlying causes of homelessness and the effectiveness of government measures aimed at supporting the homeless population. Consequently, this study analyzes the distribution of homelessness across India's states, examining how various background characteristics contribute to this issue.

2.2 Objective of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are-

- To assess the magnitude of the homeless population in India and its states.
- To assess the socio-demographic structure of the homeless population

in India state-wise.

- To explore the determinants of the homeless population in India state-wise.

2.3 Source of Data

The Indian census provides an accurate and comprehensive account of the country's population, capturing details about its people, including their diversity in habitation, religion, culture, language, education, health, and socio-economic conditions. It serves as the primary source of essential benchmark statistics, encompassing not only the settled population but also homeless individuals and nomadic groups. In India, the population census is conducted primarily through direct visits, covering all individuals who are physically present and residing, whether regularly or temporarily, in the country at a specific point in time. For this study, Census 2011 was utilized to analyse the homeless population based on sex, education, caste, employment status, and residence across various states and union territories in the country.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Bi-variate and multi-variate techniques used in this study. Bivariate techniques have been used to assess the variation of the homeless population across the country by social and background characteristics. Multivariate techniques were used to understand the determinants of the homeless population across the country. a linear regression model used to determine the relationship between homelessness and socio-economic variables. To meet the specific objective statistical software SPSS (20) and MS-Excel used for this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

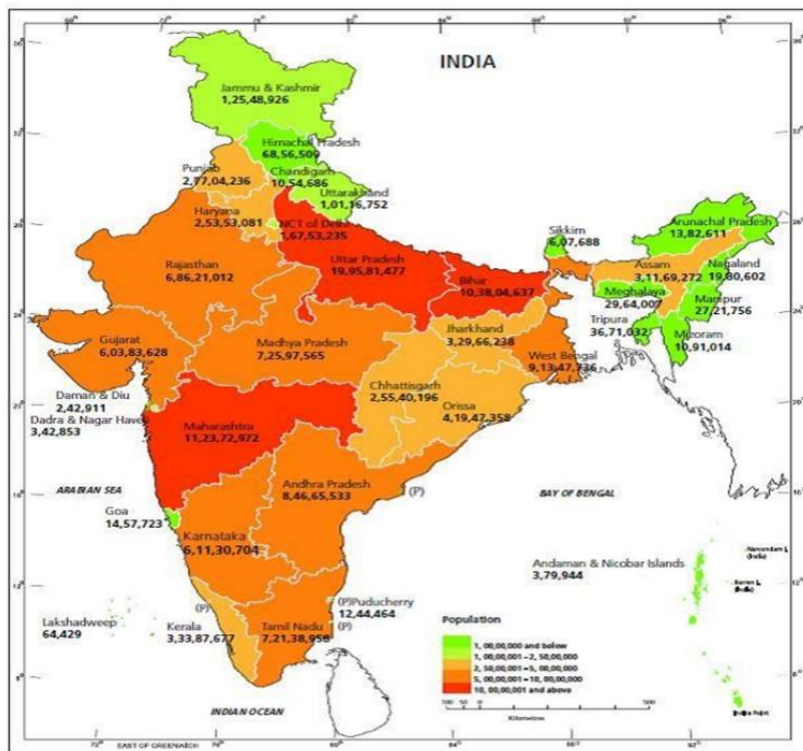


Figure 1: Spatial Distribution of Homeless Population in India (Source: Census of India 2011)

Table 1: Total homeless population by background characteristics of India (2011)		
Background Characteristic	Homeless Population (N)	Percent (%)
Rural	834692	47.1
Urban	938348	52.9
Male	1046871	59.0
Female	726169	41.0
Literate pop.	588392	33.2
Illiterate pop.	1184648	66.8
SC	306253	17.3

Table 1 (cont): Total homeless population by background characteristics of India (2011)

ST	223422	12.6
Other	654973	70.1
Worker pop.	919570	51.8
Non-worker pop.	853470	48.2
Total	1773040	100

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 1 outlines the demographic characteristics of the homeless population in India in 2011. Out of the country's total population of 121.01 crore, approximately 1,773,040 individuals were identified as homeless. A rural-urban comparison reveals that a higher proportion of the homeless population resides in urban areas (53%). Gender-wise, nearly 60% of the homeless were male, while 40% were female. The findings also indicate that two-thirds of the homeless population were illiterate, while one-third

were literate. Caste-based analysis shows that the majority (70%) of the homeless population belonged to other castes, followed by Scheduled Castes (17%) and Scheduled Tribes (13%). Regarding employment, about 52% of the homeless population was engaged in work, while 48% were non-working, according to the Census. The analysis of the Census 2011 data highlights various aspects of the homeless population in India across different states and union territories.

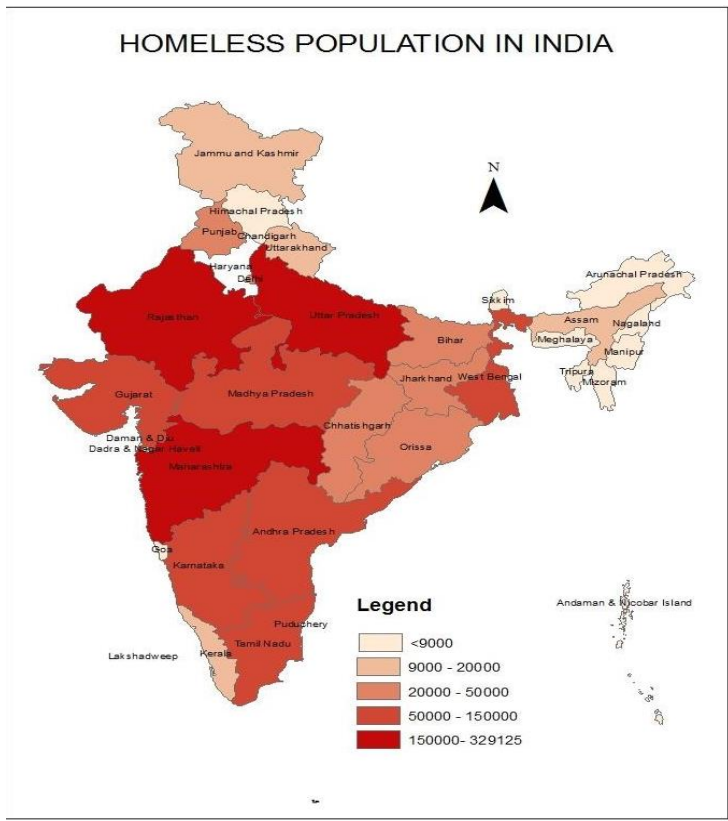
Table 2: Homeless population in India and States (2011)

India/State	Homeless Pop (%)	Homeless Pop of Total Pop (%)	Homeless Population
Uttar Pradesh	18.56	0.16	329125
Maharashtra	11.90	0.19	210908
Rajasthan	10.24	0.26	181544
Madhya Pradesh	8.26	0.2	146435
Andhra Pradesh	8.19	0.17	145211
Gujarat	8.14	0.24	144306
West Bengal	7.56	0.15	134040
Karnataka	4.33	0.13	76735
Tamil Nadu	2.87	0.07	50929
Punjab	2.63	0.17	46714
Bihar	2.57	0.04	45584
Orissa	1.92	0.08	34061
Chhattisgarh	1.37	0.09	24214
Jharkhand	1.32	0.07	23391
Jammu & Kashmir	1.07	0.15	19047
Assam	0.73	0.04	12919
Kerala	0.67	0.04	11853
Uttarakhand	0.67	0.12	11824
Himachal Pradesh	0.23	0.06	4098
Tripura	0.18	0.09	3225
Manipur	0.18	0.12	3212
Goa	0.17	0.21	3051
Arunachal Pradesh	0.09	0.11	1556
Meghalaya	0.07	0.04	1241
Nagaland	0.05	0.04	876
Sikkim	0.02	0.05	277
Mizoram	0.01	0.01	152
Union Territories			
NCT of Delhi	2.66	0.28	47076
Chandigarh	0.23	0.39	4139
Puducherry	0.09	0.13	1590
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.06	0.29	1004
Daman & Diu	0.04	0.3	737
A & Nicobar Islands	0.01	0.03	95
India		0.15	1773040

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 2 shows that Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, accounts for the largest share of the homeless population (19%), followed by Maharashtra (12%), Rajasthan (10.2%), Madhya Pradesh (8.3%), Andhra Pradesh (8.2%), and Gujarat (8.1%). The northeastern states report the lowest numbers, with Mizoram (0.01%), Nagaland (0.05%), and

Meghalaya (0.07%) having minimal homeless populations, while Assam (0.73%) has the highest among the northeastern states. Among union territories, Puducherry (0.09%) has the highest proportion of homeless individuals, while Andaman & Nicobar Islands report the lowest.



Calculated by Author

Table 3: The rural and urban differential of the homeless population in India and States (2011)

India/State	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Total Homeless
Uttar Pradesh	45.0	55.0	329125
Maharashtra	47.2	52.8	210908
Rajasthan	59.7	40.3	181544
Madhya Pradesh	54.9	45.1	146435
Andhra Pradesh	47.8	52.2	145211
Gujarat	41.2	58.8	144306
West Bengal	21.7	78.3	134040
Karnataka	53.8	46.2	76735
Tamil Nadu	27.1	72.9	50929
Punjab	60.7	39.3	46714
Bihar	72.4	27.6	45584
Orissa	58.7	41.3	34061
Chhattisgarh	73.0	27.0	24214
Jharkhand	70.2	29.8	23391
Jammu & Kashmir	43.0	57.0	19047
Assam	80.4	19.6	12919
Kerala	34.5	65.5	11853
Uttarakhand	53.0	47.0	11824
Himachal Pradesh	78.7	21.3	4098
Tripura	58.1	41.9	3225
Manipur	58.6	41.4	3212
Goa	44.5	55.5	3051
Arunachal Pradesh	79.9	20.1	1556
Meghalaya	85.7	14.3	1241
Nagaland	60.7	39.3	876
Sikkim	88.4	11.6	277
Mizoram	31.6	68.4	152
Union Territories			

Table 3 (cont): The rural and urban differential of the homeless population in India and States (2011)

NCT of Delhi	0.7	99.3	47076
D & N Haveli	72.0	28.0	4139
Pudu cherry	5.2	94.8	1590
Chandigarh	0.1	99.9	1004
Daman & Diu	19.8	80.2	737
A & n islands	31.6	68.4	95
India	47.1	52.9	1773040

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 3 highlights the rural-urban split of the homeless population. States like Sikkim (88.4%), Meghalaya (85.7%), and Assam (80.4%) have the highest rural homeless proportions. In contrast, urban homelessness dominates in Chandigarh (99.9%), NCT of Delhi (99.3%), and Puducherry

(94%). Among states, West Bengal (78%), Tamil Nadu (73%), and Kerala (66%) have significant urban homeless populations, while northeastern states such as Assam (20%) and Sikkim (12%) report the lowest.

Table 4: Sex wise homeless population in India and States (2011)

India/State	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
Uttar Pradesh	62.5	37.5	329125
Maharashtra	60.6	39.4	210908
Rajasthan	53.7	46.3	181544
Madhya Pradesh	55.7	44.3	146435
Andhra Pradesh	52.1	47.9	145211
Gujarat	58.2	41.8	144306
West Bengal	68.5	31.5	134040
Karnataka	55.9	44.1	76735
Tamil Nadu	55.2	44.8	50929
Punjab	55.3	44.7	46714
Bihar	53.2	46.8	45584
Orissa	57.8	42.2	34061
Chhattisgarh	57.3	42.7	24214
Jharkhand	54.8	45.2	23391
Jammu & Kashmir	55.3	44.7	19047
Assam	51.8	48.2	12919
Kerala	65.4	34.6	11853
Uttarakhand	67.0	33.0	11824
Himachal Pradesh	60.5	39.5	4098
Tripura	54.4	45.6	3225
Manipur	49.6	50.4	3212
Goa	67.2	32.8	3051
Arunachal Pradesh	59.4	40.6	1556
Meghalaya	50.1	49.9	1241
Nagaland	60.3	39.7	876
Sikkim	56.3	43.7	277
Mizoram	53.3	46.7	152
Union Territories			
NCT of Delhi	80.4	19.6	47076
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	54.7	45.3	4139
Puducherry	48.9	51.1	1590
Chandigarh	92.7	7.3	1004
Daman & Diu	58.2	41.8	737
A & N Islands	84.2	15.8	95
India	59.0	41.0	1773040

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 4 reveals that 59% of the homeless population in India are male, with states like West Bengal (68.5%), Goa, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh reporting the highest proportions of male homelessness, often linked to migration for work. Female homelessness is relatively higher in Manipur

(50.4%), Meghalaya (50%), and Assam (48%). Among union territories, Chandigarh has the highest proportion of male homeless individuals (93%), while Puducherry (51%) has the highest proportion of female homeless individuals.

Table 5: Literate and Illiterate homeless population of India (2011)			
India/State	Literate (%)	Illiterate (%)	Total
Uttar Pradesh	31.8	68.2	329125
Maharashtra	43.1	57.0	210908
Rajasthan	15.8	84.2	181544
Madhya Pradesh	25.8	74.2	146435
Andhra Pradesh	40.1	59.9	145211
Gujarat	28.9	71.2	144306
West Bengal	38.1	61.9	134040
Karnataka	38.7	61.3	76735
Tamil Nadu	44.2	55.8	50929
Punjab	22.0	78.0	46714
Bihar	38.9	61.1	45584
Orissa	40.5	59.5	34061
Chhattisgarh	35.9	64.1	24214
Jharkhand	32.7	67.3	23391
Jammu & Kashmir	24.6	75.4	19047
Assam	54.6	45.4	12919
Kerala	54.0	46.0	11853
Uttarakhand	40.0	60.0	11824
Himachal Pradesh	39.2	60.8	4098
Tripura	70.8	29.2	3225
Manipur	67.0	33.0	3212
Goa	49.0	51.0	3051
Arunachal Pradesh	51.9	48.1	1556
Meghalaya	45.5	54.6	1241
Nagaland	52.9	47.2	876
Sikkim	70.0	30.0	277
Mizoram	82.2	17.8	152
Union Territories			
NCT of Delhi	42.6	57.4	47076
Chandigarh	52.7	47.3	4139
Puducherry	46.0	54.0	1590
Dadra & Nagar H	15.4	84.6	1004
Daman & Diu	31.5	68.5	737
A & N Islands	63.2	36.8	95
India	33.2	66.8	1773040

Source: Census of India 2011

Table 5 shows that two-thirds of the homeless population in India are illiterate. The states with the highest literate homeless populations include Mizoram (82%), Tripura (71%), and Sikkim (70%). Conversely, Rajasthan (84%), Punjab (78%), and Jammu & Kashmir (75%) have the highest

proportions of illiterate homeless individuals. Among union territories, Dadra & Nagar Haveli (85%) and Daman & Diu (68%) have the highest percentages of illiterate homeless populations, while Chandigarh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands have the lowest.

Table 6: Homeless population by caste in India and States (2011)				
India/State	SC	ST	Other	Total
Uttar Pradesh	24.1	1.1	74.8	329125
Maharashtra	8.1	19.6	72.4	210908
Rajasthan	30.6	8.0	61.4	181544
Madhya Pradesh	13.5	37.7	48.9	146435
Andhra Pradesh	13.3	13.7	73.0	145211
Gujarat	3.1	28.3	68.5	144306
West Bengal	9.8	3.2	87.1	134040
Karnataka	31.4	7.9	60.7	76735
Tamil Nadu	28.0	5.5	66.4	50929
Punjab	24.3	0.0	75.7	46714
Bihar	19.6	3.5	77.0	45584

Table 6 (cont): Homeless population by caste in India and States (2011)

State/Union Territory	Untouchables (%)	Other Castes (%)	Scheduled Castes (%)	Total
Orissa	19.6	24.5	55.9	34061
Chhattisgarh	17.2	27.3	55.5	24214
Jharkhand	22.9	20.8	56.4	23391
Jammu & Kashmir	1.4	31.5	67.1	19047
Assam	6.1	10.6	83.3	12919
Kerala	6.8	2.7	90.6	11853
Uttarakhand	11.3	1.5	87.2	11824
Himachal Pradesh	21.6	7.1	71.3	4098
Tripura	15.9	23.5	60.6	3225
Manipur	2.4	41.9	55.7	3212
Goa	0.7	2.0	97.3	3051
Arunachal Pradesh	0.0	53.3	46.7	1556
Meghalaya	0.1	78.8	21.1	1241
Nagaland	0.0	61.0	39.0	876
Sikkim	4.0	33.2	62.8	277
Mizoram	0.0	97.4	2.6	152
Union Territories				
Chandigarh	7.8	0.0	92.2	1004
NCT of Delhi	13.5	0.0	86.5	47076
Daman & Diu	0.9	15.2	83.9	737
Puducherry	53.8	0.0	46.2	1590
Dadra & Nagar H	0.7	59.4	39.9	4139
A & N Islands	-	-	100	95
India	17.3	12.6	70.1	1773040

Source: Census of India 2011

Table-6 indicates that over two-thirds of the homeless population belong to other castes, followed by Scheduled Castes (17.3%) and Scheduled Tribes (12.6%). The highest proportions of upper-caste homeless individuals are found in Goa, Kerala, and Uttarakhand, while Mizoram,

Meghalaya, and Nagaland report the lowest. Scheduled Caste homelessness is most prevalent in Karnataka, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu, while Scheduled Tribe homelessness is higher in northeastern states like Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Nagaland.

Table 7: Working and non-working homeless population of India and States (2011)

India/State	Working (%)	Non-working (%)	Total
Uttar Pradesh	51.3	48.7	329125
Maharashtra	58.3	41.7	210908
Rajasthan	45.4	54.6	181544
Madhya Pradesh	54.8	45.2	146435
Andhra Pradesh	47.9	52.1	145211
Gujarat	57.3	42.7	144306
West Bengal	52.7	47.4	134040
Karnataka	57.3	42.7	76735
Tamil Nadu	45.9	54.1	50929
Punjab	43.6	56.4	46714
Bihar	36.9	63.1	45584
Orissa	49.6	50.4	34061
Chhattisgarh	53.6	46.4	24214
Jharkhand	44.4	55.6	23391
Jammu & Kashmir	41.3	58.7	19047
Assam	40.4	59.6	12919
Kerala	45.8	54.2	11853
Uttarakhand	51.8	48.2	11824
Himachal Pradesh	56.1	43.9	4098
Tripura	40.8	59.2	3225
Manipur	41.7	58.3	3212
Goa	66.8	33.2	3051
Arunachal Pradesh	51.2	48.8	1556

Table 7 (cont): Working and non-working homeless population of India and States (2011)

Meghalaya	48.5	51.5	1241
Nagaland	52.7	47.3	876
Sikkim	46.2	53.8	277
Mizoram	44.7	55.3	152
Union Territories			
NCT of Delhi	73.4	26.6	47076
Chandigarh	90.0	10.1	4139
Puducherry	44.7	55.4	1590
Dadra & Nagar H	65.0	35.0	1004
Daman & Diu	77.6	22.4	737
A & N Islands	62.1	37.9	95
India	51.3	48.7	1773040

Source: Census of India 2011

Table-7 shows that 52% of the homeless population is engaged in work, predominantly as daily or casual labourers. Among union territories, Chandigarh (90%) has the highest working homeless population, followed by Daman & Diu (78%) and Dadra & Nagar Haveli (65%). Goa (67%), Maharashtra (58%), and Karnataka (57.3%) lead among states.

Conversely, non-working homeless populations are higher in Bihar (63%), Assam (60%), and Tripura (59%). Among union territories, Puducherry (55%) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (38%) have the highest non-working homeless populations.

Table 8: Results of linear regression portraying the association with homeless population by selected background Characteristic.

Homeless Population	Regression Coefficient (Beta)	P-value	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Value	Upper Value
Sex				
Male (%)	0.010	.072	-.001	.021
Residence				
Urban (%)	0.004	.000	.002	.005
Caste				
Schedule Caste (%)	0.001	.611	-.003	.004
Schedule tribe (%)	-0.001	.189	-.002	.000
Education				
Illiterates (%)	0.006	.003	.002	.010
Working Status				
Non-working (%)	-0.005	.034	-.009	.000
Constant	-0.385	.242	-1.044	.274
R Square	.66			

Calculated by Author

Table 8 presents the results of a linear regression model assessing the relationship between homelessness and socio-economic variables. The analysis shows:

- A 1% increase in the male population is associated with a 0.010% increase in homelessness.
- A 1% rise in urban population corresponds to a 0.004% increase in homelessness.
- A 1% increase in the illiterate population is associated with a 0.006% increase in homelessness.
- A 1% increase in the non-working population corresponds to a 0.005% decrease in homelessness.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examines the variations in the homeless population across different regions of India. The findings indicate that while the overall homeless population in the country is decreasing, it is increasing in urban areas. This trend is more pronounced in highly populous states. The rise in urban homelessness can be attributed to factors such as urban migration in search of employment and better living conditions. The study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive national framework and targeted programs to address the challenges faced by both urban and rural homeless populations. Ensuring affordable and accessible housing options could significantly reduce homelessness and improve the socio-economic conditions of affected individuals.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Housing Schemes: Expand the reach of affordable housing schemes, particularly in urban centers, while addressing gaps in urban and rural housing initiatives like PMAY- Urban and Gramin.

Education and Skill Development: Implement vocational training programs for the homeless to enhance employability, combined with adult education campaigns to improve literacy.

Gender-Sensitive Policies: Develop tailored support systems for homeless women, including shelters, healthcare access, and livelihood programs.

Inclusive Social Protection: Ensure the inclusion of SCs, STs, and other marginalized groups in housing schemes and social security programs to address disparities.

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