

Lab 1 Report: Migrant Workers Facing Housing Insecurity

Situation Selected

Migrant workers in urban India often struggle with unstable, unsafe, and unaffordable housing. This affects their well-being, work performance, and long-term stability.

Step 1: Observation

Observation Method

- Visited local labor accommodations and workers' living areas
- Watched videos and reports about migrant housing conditions
- Informal conversations with workers at workplaces and settlements

Key Observations

- Migrant workers often live in rented rooms, shared accommodation, or temporary shelters.
- Housing often lacks essential amenities like clean water and toilets.
- Frequent relocation — either voluntary or forced — increases instability.
- High rents relative to income create ongoing financial stress.

Output: Observation Log

Step 2: User Identification (Stakeholder List)

User Group	Role	Expectations
Migrant Workers (Primary Users)	Work in cities but originate elsewhere	Affordable, safe, stable housing near workplaces
Employers / Contractors	Provide jobs and sometimes accommodation	Low accommodation cost for employees
Landlords & Rental Providers	Rent housing to workers	Income from rental without legal complications
Local Authorities / Government	Urban planning and welfare implementation	Urban order and migration management

Output: Stakeholder List

Step 3: Interviews / Surveys

Interview Process

- Conducted via a Google Form survey
- **30+ respondents** (migrant workers and some non-migrants)
- Key questions on housing type, security, challenges, and suggestions

Example Interview Questions

1. Are you a migrant worker?

2. Which city are you currently working in?
3. What type of housing do you live in?
4. How secure do you feel in your housing?
5. How often have you had to change your place of stay?
6. What are the main housing challenges you face?
7. Does your housing have basic amenities?
8. Have you ever been asked to vacate by your landlord/employer?
9. How does housing insecurity affect your work and well-being?
10. What measures do you think can improve housing conditions?

Key Insights from Responses

- Many respondents live in **rented rooms or shared accommodation**.
- Frequent mention of **high rent** as a major issue.
- **Poor living conditions, overcrowding, and lack of basic facilities** are common concerns.
- Some report **distance from workplaces** adds travel cost and time.
- Some respondents feel **somewhat secure**, others **not secure at all**.
- Suggestions include **rent control, better amenities, rent subsidies, and legal protections**.

Output: Interview Summary

Step 4: Pain-Point Analysis

Category Pain Points Identified

Functional Lack of stable housing, overcrowding, frequent relocation

Emotional Stress, anxiety over eviction, insecurity about future

Systemic High rent in urban areas, no rental agreements, lack of housing support

Most Critical Pain Point

Lack of access to safe, affordable, and legally secure housing in urban areas for migrant workers.

Output: Pain-Point Table

Step 5: Root Cause Identification (5-Why Analysis)

Critical Pain Point: Housing insecurity among migrant workers

1. **Why** do workers lack secure housing?
→ Because affordable formal housing isn't accessible.
2. **Why** isn't formal housing accessible?
→ Due to high urban rents compared to income.
3. **Why** are rents high relative to income?
→ Urban demand and lack of rent regulation.

4. **Why** is there no rent regulation?

→ Policy gaps and weak enforcement.

5. **Why** are policies weak?

→ Lack of targeted support for migrant families and informal work structures.

Root Causes Identified

- Absence of affordable housing policies for migrants
- Lack of legal rental protections
- Informal employment → financial instability
- Inadequate access to government support

Output: Root Cause Diagram (5-Why)

Step 6: Wicked Problem Understanding

This housing insecurity is a **Wicked Problem** because:

- **Hard to define** — different workers have different housing types and security levels.
- **Multiple stakeholders** — workers, employers, landlords, and authorities have conflicting interests.
- **No single solution** — building housing alone won't fix affordability or policy gaps.
- Connected economic, social, and legal systems shape the problem.

Classification: Wicked Problem

Output: Wicked Problem Explanation

Step 7: Reflection

During this lab, my initial assumptions changed significantly. I initially thought only income was responsible for housing insecurity. After interviewing real users, I learned that **systemic issues like rent regulations, landlord practices, and lack of legal protection are equally significant**. Hearing user voices emphasized that solutions must address *both emotional and systemic layers*, not just basic shelter.

This exercise taught me the importance of:

- Empathy in understanding user challenges
- Distinguishing symptoms from root causes
- Why jumping to solutions without deep analysis can fail

For example, suggesting “more housing” doesn’t help if migrants can’t afford it or aren’t legally protected.

Understanding users first is essential for effective design and solutions.

Output: Reflection Report