

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.

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.
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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

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?

Timestamp	Name	1. Are you a migrant worker?	2. Which city are you currently working in?
1/16/2026 10:35:34	Bhavana	Yes	Hyderabad
1/16/2026 10:38:10	Dharan V	Yes	Bangalore
1/16/2026 10:38:45	Harshi	Yes	Bangalore
1/16/2026 10:41:49	Barsha	No	Bangalore
1/16/2026 10:49:42	UJALA YADAV	Yes	Bangalore
1/18/2026 18:19:25	Dilip Kumar. B	No	Karnataka
1/19/2026 21:19:37	Osamu Dazai	No	I'm migrant student, lives in NCR
1/20/2026 11:01:28	Kiran Gowda	No	Mysore
1/23/2026 10:55:31	Gagana Acharya	No	Bangalore
1/23/2026 11:01:24	Samuel Kurian	No	Bangalore
1/23/2026 11:13:39	PARAMESH RAJ N	No	Bengaluru
1/23/2026 12:12:36	Varun	Yes	Bengaluru
1/24/2026 10:33:04	Saniya Taj	No	Bangalore
1/27/2026 8:37:40	Lochana S	Yes	Bangalore
1/27/2026 8:37:47	Padma G	Yes	Hyderabad
1/27/2026 8:38:52	Vishnu V	Yes	Jayanagar
1/27/2026 8:39:09	Gopal	Yes	Chennai
1/27/2026 8:39:57	Tamil Priya R	No	Bangalore
1/27/2026 8:40:36	Madhushree	Yes	Banglore
1/27/2026 8:41:21	Karthik GH	Yes	Chennai
1/27/2026 8:42:07	Lakshmamma	Yes	Banglore
1/27/2026 8:42:31	Meena Kumari KL	Yes	Gujarat
1/27/2026 8:43:15	Tejaswini	Yes	Delhi
1/27/2026 8:43:52	Pooja verma B	Yes	Delhi
1/27/2026 8:44:43	Deeksha	Yes	Banglore
1/27/2026 8:45:25	Neha Kumar P	No	Goa
1/27/2026 8:45:50	Chirag	Yes	Kerala
1/27/2026 8:47:43	Shreyas	Yes	Gujarath
1/27/2026 8:49:16	Yeshika	Yes	Surath
1/27/2026 21:19:02	Maha	No	Bangalore

3. What type of housing do you currently live in?	4. How secure do you feel in your current housing?
No fixed housing	Somewhat secure
Rented room/house	Somewhat secure
Rented room/house	Very secure
Shared accommodation	Somewhat secure
Employer-provided accommodation	Somewhat secure
No fixed housing	Somewhat secure
Shared accommodation	Very secure
No fixed housing	Very secure
Rented room/house	Very secure
Temporary shelter	Very secure
Rented room/house	Not secure
Rented room/house	Very secure
Rented room/house	Very secure
Shared accommodation	Somewhat secure
Rented room/house	Somewhat secure
Shared accommodation	Very secure
Shared accommodation	Not secure
No fixed housing	Somewhat secure
Employer-provided accommodation	Somewhat secure
Rented room/house	Somewhat secure
Rented room/house	Very secure
Temporary shelter	Somewhat secure
Temporary shelter	Not secure
Shared accommodation	Not secure
Rented room/house	Somewhat secure
No fixed housing	Very secure
Shared accommodation	Not secure
Employer-provided accommodation	Somewhat secure
Employer-provided accommodation	Not secure
Shared accommodation	Somewhat secure

5. How often have you had to change your place of residence?

1–2 times	High rent, Overcrowding, Lack of basic facilities (water, toilet, electricity)
1–2 times	High rent, Poor living conditions, Distance from workplace
1–2 times	High rent, Distance from workplace
3–4 times	High rent, Lack of basic facilities (water, toilet, electricity)
3–4 times	High rent, Distance from workplace
Not at all	High rent, Poor living conditions, Overcrowding

6. What are the main challenges you face regarding your place of residence?

1–2 times	High rent, Risk of eviction, Discrimination by landlord
Not at all	Distance from workplace
3–4 times	High rent, Poor living conditions, Overcrowding, Lack of basic facilities
Not at all	Distance from workplace
Not at all	High rent
Not at all	High rent
3–4 times	Poor living conditions, Lack of basic facilities (water, toilet, electricity)
1–2 times	High rent, Distance from workplace
Not at all	High rent, Risk of eviction, Distance from workplace
3–4 times	Poor living conditions, Overcrowding, Risk of eviction
3–4 times	Overcrowding
1–2 times	Overcrowding, Risk of eviction
More than 4 times	High rent, Poor living conditions, Overcrowding, Lack of basic facilities
Not at all	Distance from workplace
1–2 times	High rent, Risk of eviction
3–4 times	Poor living conditions, Lack of basic facilities (water, toilet, electricity)
More than 4 times	Poor living conditions, Risk of eviction
Not at all	High rent
3–4 times	High rent, Poor living conditions, Distance from workplace
3–4 times	Overcrowding, Risk of eviction
1–2 times	Poor living conditions, Overcrowding, Lack of basic facilities
3–4 times	Poor living conditions, Overcrowding, Lack of basic facilities
More than 4 times	Poor living conditions, Overcrowding, Lack of basic facilities

7. Does your housing have access to basic amenities? 8. Has your landlord or employer ever told you to va

Some amenities	Yes
Some amenities	No
Some amenities	No
Very few amenities	No
Some amenities	Yes
Yes, all basic amenities	No
Yes, all basic amenities	Yes
Yes, all basic amenities	No
Yes, all basic amenities	No
Some amenities	No
Yes, all basic amenities	Yes
Yes, all basic amenities	No
Some amenities	No
Some amenities	No
Yes, all basic amenities	Yes
Very few amenities	Yes
Very few amenities	No
Some amenities	No
Some amenities	Yes
Yes, all basic amenities	No
Some amenities	Yes
Very few amenities	Yes
Yes, all basic amenities	No
Yes, all basic amenities	No
Very few amenities	Yes
Yes, all basic amenities	Yes

9. How does housing insecurity affect your work and health?		10. What measures do you think can improve housing conditions for migrant workers?
Affects all of the above		
Affects mental health		As a migrant worker ... I do face high rent in main cities so I just want some house for reasonable prices without discrimination.
Affects all of the above		Implementation of policies such as rent control and subsidies.
Affects mental health		Yes
Affects physical health		By providing good facilities
Does not affect much		Basically I live in my own house I don't have the expense of rent. I think improving housing conditions for migrant workers is important.
Affects all of the above		1. Migrant worker must not be discriminated on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity. 2. Rent shall be affordable and monitored by a monitoring committee. 3. While renting, there must be a lock-in agreement. 4. In case of owner have to ask tenant to vacate the house, there must be a compensation package. 5. If the owner has to ask tenant to vacate within the lease period, there must be a grace period. 6. Only those flats/rooms must be provided on rent which are in good condition.
Affects physical health		
Affects mental health		To make the rent less
Does not affect much		Nothing
Does not affect much		
Affects work performance		Affordable rent
Does not affect much		
Affects mental health		Hostel-type housing with low rent can help single migrant workers.
Affects mental health		Rent should be controlled so landlords don't overcharge.
Affects all of the above		Government schemes should be clearly informed to migrant workers.
Affects all of the above		There should be proper legal agreements to prevent exploitation.
Affects all of the above		Housing should be closer to the workplace to reduce travel time.
Affects work performance		Government should provide affordable rental houses.
Affects all of the above		Housing should be closer to the workplace to reduce travel time.
Affects work performance		Employers should take responsibility for providing decent living conditions.
Affects work performance		Regular inspections should be done to check living conditions.
Affects all of the above		Basic facilities like clean water, toilets, and electricity should be provided.
Affects all of the above		Regular inspections should be done to check living conditions.
Affects work performance		Affordable housing projects should be built only for migrant workers.
Does not affect much		Identity proof alternatives should be accepted for rental applications.
Affects all of the above		Landlords should not discriminate against migrant workers.
Affects mental health		Affordable housing projects should be built only for migrant workers.
Affects physical health		Better sanitation and waste management should be implemented.
Affects mental health		

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.**
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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.

Root Cause Identification

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
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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.
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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.