



The Affordability Crisis in Mumbai's Housing Market: Customer Perceptions of Rental Burden and the Search for Sustainable Living Solutions

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Abstract – Mumbai's housing market is facing an acute affordability crisis, with rental costs far exceeding sustainable income levels for a significant portion of the population. This study examines the extent of rental burden and its impact on the financial stability and quality of life of Mumbai's residents. Using primary data collection, including online surveys and interviews with 300+ respondents, the research quantifies the proportion of income spent on rent and identifies key challenges in accessing affordable housing. The study further explores sustainable living solutions, such as co-living spaces, micro-apartments, and policy interventions, to mitigate the crisis. A core hypothesis tested in this research is whether rental costs exceeding 30% of income significantly increase financial stress. Statistical analysis, including t-Tests and Regression Analysis, is applied to validate the relationship between rental burden and compromised living conditions. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and real estate stakeholders, emphasizing the urgent need for innovative and sustainable housing solutions. By addressing both the economic and human impact of Mumbai's housing crisis, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of urban affordability challenges and offers potential pathways for a more inclusive and sustainable housing market.

Keywords – Mumbai housing crisis, Rental burden, Affordable housing, Sustainable living solutions & Urban housing challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

Mumbai, India's financial capital, faces a severe housing affordability crisis, with property prices and rental costs rising significantly faster than income levels. Recent reports from the National Housing Bank and Knight Frank indicate that property prices have been increasing by 10-15% annually, while wage growth remains sluggish. As a result, a large portion of Mumbai's population—especially middle- and lower-income groups—spends 40-50% of their income on rent, exceeding the recommended 30% threshold.

The crisis has led to overcrowding, slum expansion, and long commutes, negatively impacting quality of life and productivity. This study quantifies rental burden, explores resident experiences, and investigates sustainable housing solutions to address affordability issues. By collecting primary data from Mumbai residents, the research aims to offer actionable insights for policymakers, developers, and urban planners, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable housing market in Mumbai.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Escalating Real Estate Prices and Rental Burden

Mumbai has witnessed a sharp escalation in real estate prices, largely driven by persistent demand and limited housing supply. Knight Frank (2023) and Anarock (2024) report significant increases in property rates across urban and suburban zones. The National Housing Bank (2024) classifies Mumbai among India's highest-cost rental markets. The Times of India (2024) and Hindustan Times

(2023) reveal that over 30% of household income is frequently allocated to rent, indicating financial strain on middle and lower-income groups. This aligns with broader behavioral economic patterns, where price perception significantly influences consumer choices in constrained markets (Bapat et al., 2023).

2. Factors Contributing to the Crisis

Several systemic and economic factors underlie Mumbai's housing crisis. TISS (2022) points to rapid immigration and inadequate affordable housing infrastructure as core challenges. MHADA (2023) identifies land scarcity and administrative bottlenecks as key delays in project delivery. The Hindu (2023) and Scroll.in (2024) highlight speculative investment as a principal contributor to real estate inflation. Additionally, the RBI (2023) notes rising construction input costs and interest rates as worsening affordability. Similar systemic inefficiencies and resilience challenges have been observed in transportation-linked economic studies (Shinde & Balasubramanian, 2021), reflecting the importance of policy-driven infrastructure reform.

3. Impact on Quality of Life and Sustainable Living

The rental burden and lack of affordable housing directly affect residents' well-being. Habitat for Humanity (2023) documents increased overcrowding and deteriorating living conditions. Reports from The Wire (2024) and Firstpost (2023) underline the psychological stress stemming from insecure housing. WRI India (2023) promotes sustainable interventions such as transit-oriented development and energy-efficient urban planning. In parallel, innovative housing formats—like co-living models and micro-apartments—are gaining prominence



(Business Standard, 2024; Moneycontrol, 2023). These trends reflect shifting consumer behaviors, similar to patterns identified in FMCG markets, where CSR initiatives and perceived value strongly influence preferences (Shinde, 2014; Goyal, 2022).

4. Policy and Intervention

Government interventions such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and MHADA housing schemes (2023) are designed to bridge the affordability gap. However, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG, 2023) highlights inefficiencies in implementation and disbursement. The Observer Research Foundation (ORF, 2023) advocates for land policy reforms and regulation of speculative investments to foster equitable development. Broader institutional challenges in public policy and governance, especially in the urban development and education sectors, have been documented in recent literature (Bajaj et al., 2023; Deshmukh et al., 2023), calling for more integrated, stakeholder-driven approaches. Moreover, understanding social behavior and the role of networks in policy uptake can enhance program effectiveness (Karve & Shinde, 2013; Shinde et al., 2023).

III. RESEARCH GAP

While existing literature extensively covers the rising real estate prices, rental burden, and policy interventions in Mumbai, there is limited research on the lived experiences of residents struggling with housing affordability. Most studies focus on economic and structural factors but lack empirical data on how rental burden affects quality of life, financial stability, and well-being. Additionally, research on sustainable living solutions as viable alternatives to traditional housing remains insufficient. This study aims to bridge these gaps by incorporating primary data through surveys and interviews to provide a more nuanced understanding of Mumbai's housing crisis.

Significance of the Study

This study is crucial as it provides empirical insights into the housing affordability crisis in Mumbai, focusing on its financial and social impact on residents. By analyzing rental burden across income groups, it highlights the economic strain on households and the challenges in securing affordable housing. Additionally, the research explores sustainable living solutions, offering potential alternatives to improve housing accessibility. The findings will be valuable for policymakers, urban planners, and stakeholders in designing effective housing policies and interventions, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable urban living environment in Mumbai.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the rental burden across different income groups in Mumbai and determine the percentage of income spent on housing.

- To assess the impact of rental burden on residents' financial stability, quality of life, and access to essential services.
- To explore perceptions of sustainable living solutions as potential alternatives to traditional housing in Mumbai.

Hypotheses

- **H₁ (Alternate):** Higher rental burden (spending more than 30% of income on rent) significantly increases financial stress among Mumbai residents..
- **H₀ (Null):** Higher rental burden does not significantly increase financial stress among Mumbai residents..

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Primary Data:** Collected through online surveys and interviews with Mumbai residents facing rental burden and housing affordability challenges..
- **Sampling Method:** Stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different income groups, occupations, and residential locations in Mumbai
- **Sample Size:** 350 respondents from diverse income backgrounds to ensure statistically significant results.
- **Statistical Tool:** Descriptive statistics (mean, median, percentage analysis) and inferential statistics (Chi-square test, t-test) to analyze rental burden and its impact.
- **Data Collection Tool:** Structured questionnaire (online survey) and semi-structured interviews for qualitative insights.
- **Secondary Data:** Reports from real estate consultancies (Knight Frank, Anarock), government agencies (MHADA, RBI, CAG), NGOs (Habitat for Humanity), and news articles from The Hindu, Times of India, Economic Times, and Livemint.

V. RESULTS

1. Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Demographical Profile (N= 303)

| Age Group | Counta Of Age Group |
|---|---------------------|
| 25-34 years | 66 |
| 35-44 years | 60 |
| 45-54 years | 48 |
| 55 years and above | 66 |
| Below 25 years | 63 |
| Grand Total | 303 |
| Area | Counta Of Area |
| Central Suburbs: Areas like Kurla, Ghatkopar, Chembur, Vikhroli | 57 |
| Eastern Suburbs: Areas like Mulund, Thane, Mira-Bhayandar | 69 |



| | |
|---|---|
| Navi Mumbai: Areas like Panvel, Vashi, Nerul | 51 |
| South Mumbai (Island City): Areas like Colaba, Fort, Churchgate, Marine Drive | 57 |
| Western Suburbs: Areas like Bandra, Andheri, Borivali | 69 |
| Grand Total | 303 |
| Gender | Counta Of Gender |
| Other | 87 |
| Female | 90 |
| Male | 126 |
| Grand Total | 216 |
| Employment Status | Counta Of Employment Status |
| Daily wage worker | 69 |
| Salaried (Government sector) | 54 |
| Salaried (Private sector) | 84 |
| Self-employed | 42 |
| Unemployed | 54 |
| Grand Total | 303 |
| Total Monthly Household Income | Counta Of Total Monthly Household Income |
| ₹25,000 - ₹50,000 | 81 |
| ₹50,000 - ₹1,00,000 | 78 |
| Above ₹1,00,000 | 63 |
| Below ₹25,000 | 81 |
| Grand Total | 303 |
| What Is The Total Number Of People In Your Household | Counta Of What Is The Total Number Of People In Your Household |
| 1-2 members | 75 |
| 3-4 members | 90 |
| 5-6 members | 63 |
| More than six members | 75 |
| Grand Total | 303 |

Inference

The data reflects key affordability challenges in Mumbai's housing market. The age distribution is diverse, with 25-34 years and 55 years and above groups having the highest representation (66 each), suggesting a mix of young professionals and retirees facing rental burdens. The Western and Eastern Suburbs (69 each) have the highest representation, indicating that affordability concerns are more prominent in these areas compared to Navi Mumbai (51), which has the least respondents.

Gender-wise, male respondents (126) outnumber females (90), but the claim that 87 respondents identified

as "Other" is incorrect, as the dataset does not include any such responses. Employment patterns show that private-sector employees (84) form the largest group, followed by daily wage workers (69), with 54 unemployed individuals, highlighting economic disparities that influence housing affordability.

Income distribution reveals that a significant portion earns below ₹50,000 (162 respondents), making rental affordability a major issue. Only 63 respondents earn above ₹1,00,000, reinforcing that high rental costs pose a challenge for most. Household sizes vary, with 3-4 member families (90) being the most common, while 1-2 member and larger families (75 each) indicate the presence of both nuclear and joint family structures. This demographic and economic landscape underscores the rental burden and the need for sustainable living solutions in Mumbai.

Objective 1: To analyze the rental burden across different income groups in Mumbai and determine the percentage of income spent on housing.

| | Below ₹25,000 | ₹25,000 - ₹50,000 | ₹50,000 - ₹1,00,000 | Above ₹1,00,000 | Column Totals |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Below 25 years | 9 (16.84) [3.65] | 18 (16.99) [0.20] | 15 (13.10) [0.28] | 21 (17.64) [1.03] | 63 |
| 25-34 years | 18 (17.64) [0.01] | 21 (16.99) [0.95] | 6 (13.72) [4.35] | 21 (17.64) [0.64] | 66 |
| 35-44 years | 15 (16.04) [0.07] | 12 (15.45) [0.77] | 21 (12.48) [5.83] | 12 (16.04) [1.02] | 60 |
| 45-54 years | 15 (12.83) [0.37] | 12 (12.36) [0.01] | 12 (9.98) [0.41] | 9 (12.83) [1.14] | 48 |
| 55 years and above | 24 (17.64) [2.29] | 15 (16.99) [0.23] | 9 (13.72) [1.63] | 18 (17.64) [0.01] | 66 |
| Row Totals | 81 | 78 | 63 | 81 | 303 (Grand Total) |

Inference

The analysis examines the rental burden across different income groups in Mumbai, assessing how much of their earnings are allocated to housing expenses. A Chi-Square Test was conducted to evaluate the relationship between



age groups and income distribution. The results indicate a statistically significant association ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that income levels vary notably across age groups, influencing rental affordability.

Notably, lower-income groups are more prevalent among younger and older respondents, indicating that individuals in these age brackets may experience higher rental burdens. Conversely, middle-income and higher-income groups are distributed more across the working-age population, suggesting relatively better financial stability. The findings highlight economic disparities, reinforcing the need for affordable housing policies and sustainable living solutions in Mumbai.

Objective 2: To assess the impact of rental burden on residents' financial stability, quality of life, and access to essential services.

Table: 8.3 t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

| | <i>Group 1: ≤30% Rental Burden</i> | <i>Group 2: >30% Rental Burden</i> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mean | 2.461538462 | 2.93877551 |
| Variance | 2.18560794 | 1.78389712 |
| Observations | 156 | 147 |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 | |
| df | 300 | |
| t Stat | -2.95144253 | |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 0.001706228 | |
| t Critical one-tail | 1.649948674 | |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 0.003412456 | |
| t Critical two-tail | 1.967903011 | |

Inference

The t-test analysis was conducted to assess the impact of rental burden on financial stability and quality of life by comparing two groups: those spending ≤30% of income on rent and those spending >30%.

The results show a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($t = -2.95$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals with a higher rental burden (>30%) report a lower quality of life compared to those with a lower burden (≤30%). The lower p-value (0.0034) confirms that this difference is unlikely due to chance. These findings suggest that high rental costs negatively impact financial stability and overall well-being, reinforcing the need for affordable housing solutions in Mumbai.

Objective 3: To Explore Perceptions of Sustainable Living Solutions as Potential Alternatives to Traditional Housing in Mumbai

Table 8.4.A: Correlation Analysis

| | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------|-------------|---|---|
| Are you aware of alternative housing options such as co-living spaces, micro-apartments, or government housing schemes? | options such as co-living spaces, micro-apartments, or government housing schemes? | 1 | | | |
| Would you consider moving to a sustainable or affordable housing solution if available? | Would you consider moving to a sustainable or affordable housing solution if available? | 0.111716766 | 1 | | |
| What factors would encourage you to adopt an alternative housing solution? | What factors would encourage you to adopt an alternative housing solution? | 0.086549971 | 0.062005124 | 1 | taking adequate steps to address Mumbai's housing affordability crisis? |



| | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|-------------|---|
| Do you believe the government is taking adequate steps to address Mumbai's housing affordability crisis? | 0.12107887 | 0.03085204 | 0.030940924 | 1 |
|--|------------|------------|-------------|---|

The study explores the relationship between awareness, willingness, and key factors influencing the adoption of sustainable living solutions as alternatives to traditional housing in Mumbai.

Awareness and Adoption

- The correlation (0.1117) suggests that individuals aware of alternative housing solutions (co-living, micro-apartments, government schemes) are more likely to consider them.
- However, the weak correlation indicates awareness alone is not a strong driver, implying the need for additional incentives to promote adoption.

Key Influencing Factors

- Motivating factors such as infrastructure, affordability, environmental benefits, and proximity to workplaces have a minimal correlation (0.0620) with willingness to move.
- This suggests that personal preferences, economic constraints, and socio-cultural factors may also play a role in housing decisions.

Perceptions of Government Efforts

- There is a slight positive correlation (0.1211) between awareness and belief that the government is taking steps to address the housing crisis.
- However, public confidence in government policies does not significantly impact their willingness to adopt alternative housing (0.0309), indicating potential skepticism about policy effectiveness.

Table 8.4.B: Multiple Linear Regression for Willingness to shift to sustainable housing and Key factors influencing the decision

| <i>Regression Statistics</i> | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Multiple R | 0.062005124 |
| R Square | 0.003844635 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.000535149 |
| Standard Error | 0.843392065 |
| Observations | 303 |

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------------------|
| | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>Significance F</i> |
| Regression | 1 | 0.82633 | 0.82633 | 1.161702 | 0.281976 |
| Residual | 30 | 214.1044 | 0.71131 | | |
| Total | 30 | 214.9307 | | | |

| | <i>Coefficients</i> | <i>Standard Error</i> | <i>t Stat</i> | <i>P-value</i> | <i>Lower 95%</i> | <i>Upper 95%</i> | <i>Lower 95.0%</i> | <i>Upper 95.0%</i> |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept | 1.925384234 | 0.133451 | 14.42764 | 3.14E-36 | 1.662769 | 2.188 | 1.662769 | 2.188 |
| What factors would encourage you to adopt an alternative housing solution? | 0.041522062 | 0.038524 | 1.077823 | 0.281976 | -0.03429 | 0.117333 | -0.03429 | 0.117333 |

Inference

The regression analysis aimed to explore whether factors such as better infrastructure, environmental benefits, government incentives, lower costs, and proximity to work or schools significantly influence individuals' willingness to adopt sustainable or affordable housing in Mumbai. However, the results indicate a weak correlation, with an R-Square value of only 0.38%, meaning these factors explain a negligible portion of the variation in willingness to move. The model's low Adjusted R-Square and an insignificant F-statistic (p = 0.2819) suggest that the independent variable does not meaningfully impact the dependent variable.

Further analysis of the coefficients reveals that while the intercept is statistically significant, suggesting a general openness toward sustainable housing, the independent variable (factors influencing adoption) lacks significance. The confidence interval includes zero, reinforcing the conclusion that no single factor strongly predicts willingness to move. This implies that external elements, such as social perceptions, financial constraints, and government policies, might have a more substantial influence on decision-making.



Overall, the findings suggest that merely offering alternative housing solutions is insufficient to drive widespread adoption. A more comprehensive approach, incorporating affordability measures, improved urban planning, and public trust-building initiatives, is necessary to encourage individuals to transition toward sustainable living in Mumbai.

Hypothesis Testing

- H_1 (Alternate): Higher rental burden (spending more than 30% of income on rent) significantly increases financial stress among Mumbai residents..
- H_0 (Null): Higher rental burden does not significantly increase financial stress among Mumbai residents..
- t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

| t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Group 1 (Low Burden) | Group 2 (High Burden) |
| Mean | 2.346153846 | 2.469387755 |
| Variance | 1.234243176 | 1.278166061 |
| Observations | 156 | 147 |
| Pooled Variance | 1.255547964 | |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference | 0 | |
| df | 301 | |
| t Stat | -0.956782499 | |
| P(T<=t) one-tail | 0.169722434 | |
| t Critical one-tail | 1.649931694 | |
| P(T<=t) two-tail | 0.339444869 | |
| t Critical two-tail | 1.967876531 | |

Inference

The t-test was conducted to determine whether individuals experiencing a higher rental burden (spending more than 30% of their income on rent) report significantly greater financial stress compared to those with a lower rental burden. The results show that the mean financial stress score for the high-burden group ($M = 2.47$) is slightly higher than for the low-burden group ($M = 2.35$). However, the t-statistic of -0.9568 and the p-value of 0.3394 (two-tailed) indicate that this difference is not statistically significant at the conventional 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Since the p-value is greater than the critical threshold ($0.3394 > 0.05$), we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_0). This suggests that there is no strong evidence to conclude that a higher rental burden significantly increases financial stress among Mumbai residents. The one-tailed test also supports this conclusion, with a p-value of 0.1697 , which is above the 0.05 significance level.

These findings imply that while rental burden may contribute to financial stress, other factors—such as

income levels, savings, employment stability, and personal financial management—could also play a critical role. Future research might explore additional socioeconomic variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of financial stress drivers in Mumbai's housing market

VI. CONCLUSION

- The study examines housing affordability challenges in Mumbai, highlighting that young professionals and retirees face the most significant rental burden. Western and Eastern suburbs show higher affordability concerns, and private-sector employees and daily wage workers are the most affected.
- A Chi-Square test reveals a significant relationship between age and income, showing that lower-income groups struggle more with rent. The t-test confirms that those spending over 30% of their income on rent experience a lower quality of life ($p < 0.01$), emphasizing the financial strain of high rental costs
- However, awareness of alternative housing solutions does not strongly influence adoption, and key factors like infrastructure, affordability, and government incentives show weak correlations with willingness to move. The regression analysis further confirms that these factors do not significantly predict housing decisions ($R^2 = 0.38\%$, $p = 0.2819$), implying that economic and socio-cultural barriers play a bigger role.
- Simply offering alternative housing solutions is not enough to drive adoption. A holistic approach incorporating affordability measures, urban planning improvements, and public trust-building is essential to promote sustainable housing solutions in Mumbai..

Recommendations

Mumbai's housing market faces significant affordability challenges, especially for lower-income groups and those spending over 30% of their income on rent. While awareness of alternative housing solutions exists, factors like infrastructure, environmental benefits, and government incentives have minimal influence on adoption. The t-test results indicate no statistically significant link between higher rental burden and financial stress, suggesting other factors like income stability and personal financial management play a role. Overall, simply offering alternative housing is insufficient—comprehensive policies, affordability measures, and improved infrastructure are needed to encourage adoption.

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