

Survey finds that the homeless in Mumbai also shell out at least a quarter of their meagre earnings on personal hygiene, sanitation, reports **Yogesh Pawar**



82% of the homeless in the city belong to SC, ST or OBC **93%** of the homeless have lived in Mumbai for over five years

DNA Sunday
DAILY NEWS & ANALYSIS

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They're homeless, so they pay 300 times more for

HOMELESS IN MUMBAI

₹100 is the average daily earning of the homeless

86% of the homeless said they are not able to save anything

54% of the homeless have no identity documents and only 12% have bank accounts



75% of the homeless cannot go to a private doctor or buy medicines

A new survey has found that the homeless in Mumbai spend 300 times more on drinking water than what Mumbaikars with homes have to pay. The homeless also spend anything from one-fourth to a third of their meagre daily earnings on personal hygiene and sanitation services. And 82% of the homeless in the city belong to SC, ST or OBC.

These are among the key findings of a survey titled 'Needs Of The Homeless In Mumbai' by Shwetank Mishra for the Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development (BUILD), a city-based NGO. While an average Mumbaikar gets drinking water at Rs3.50 per 1,000 litres, the homeless have no access to such water. "They have to resort to buying from shrines, watchmen of housing societies and even slum-dwellers with access to water for as much a rupee a litre," points out Mishra.

The study was done across 16 locations in the city from Borivali to South Mumbai and covered homeless families as well as individuals. "Belying the myth that the homeless are unstable, seasonal migrants, our survey found

that as many as 93% of them have lived in the city for more than 5 years," says Mishra. "A common perception about the homeless is that they move out of the city during the monsoons. We found this to be incorrect. More than three-quarters of them remain at the same locations during the rains, which shows their doggedness in taking on a harsh life to survive in the city."

According to him, "This should be reason enough for the state to take cognisance of their existence and create policies for these poorest of the poor."

The study shows how any need for hospitalisation can be extremely tough on the homeless. "Hospitals are virtually out of bounds for the individual homeless since most facilities make it mandatory for an attendant to be with the patient," says the study. "This can be particularly trying if the individual is in a critical condition." The study recommends that government hospitals should address this lacuna immediately so that the 'right to life' of these citizens is not violated. Only a quarter of the homeless can afford to go to a private doctor and buy medicines from local chemists, says the study. **TURN TO P4**

DNA SPECIAL

Homeless pay more for water

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Most of the homeless are here to make a living, but nearly a quarter of them do not get work regularly. However, a majority of them admit to earning a minimum of Rs100 per day. A third of this is spent on hygiene, one of their main expenses after food. A bucket of water for bathing or washing costs Rs10. While men get to use urinals for free, they pay Rs3 to use the toilet and women pay Rs3 each time they want to relieve themselves. "Considering that they earn only around Rs100 per day, this is prohibitive," exclaims Mishra.

The homeless face a severe food insecurity especially during non-availability of work. In such hard times, 24% use religious places, 15% ask for food from friends and 6% beg for food. As many as 86% of the homeless said they are not able to save anything. This keeps their aspiration of finding a home, a dream. More than half the homeless had no identity documents and only 12% had bank accounts. The homeless do not fit into criteria for issuance of any identity document, points out the study which recommends, "This merits seeing the homeless as a separate group in urban society and the creation of a tailor-made policy for them."