



Issue: *The right to housing*

Committee: Human Rights

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“It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.”

— **Matthew Desmond**

Introduction:

For an individual or family, housing is the cornerstone of stability and security. A house should be a sanctuary—a place to live in peace, security, and dignity. It is the center of our social, emotional, and occasionally economic existence. There must be more than just four walls and a roof in adequate dwelling. Before a specific type of shelter to be deemed to be "adequate housing," a number of requirements must be satisfied. These components are equally vital to housing availability and supply. The following requirements must, at the very least, be met for housing to be considered adequate:

- Housing is insufficient if its residents lack the legal protection from forced evictions, harassment, and other dangers that come with a degree of tenure security.

- Housing is not appropriate if its residents lack access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage, or waste disposal. Services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure availability.
- Housing must be affordable for residents to exercise their other human rights, and is not considered sufficient if it does so.
- Habitability: Housing is insufficient if it does not ensure physical safety, offer enough space, and offer protection from the elements, including the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, various health risks, and structural dangers.
- Accessibility: If the unique requirements of underprivileged and marginalized groups are not taken into account, housing will not be suitable.
- Location: Housing is inadequate if it is far away from places of work, healthcare facilities, schools, child care centers, and other social services, or if it is situated in hazardous or polluting locations.
- Housing must respect and take into account the manifestation of cultural identity in order to be considered culturally suitable.

According to a 2019 assessment by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy (LILP), based on the average housing price in proportion to the median income, 90 percent of the 200 cities studied were judged to be expensive to live in. The housing issue has only become worse as a result of COVID-19, and long-term government stimulus (an attempt by a government to increase economic activity by reducing taxes) plans meant to stave off economic calamity are unworkable.

Definitions of key terms:

Zoning: In urban planning, **zoning** is a method in which a municipality or other tier of government divides land into "zones", each of which has a set of regulations for new development that differs from other zones. Zones may be defined for a single use (e.g. residential, industrial). Reasons may include exogenous factors (natural disasters, war), demographic factors (overpopulation, massive population displacement, such as a strong rural exodus), economic factors (shock to the real estate market, directly or indirectly - on construction companies for example -, real estate speculation).

Housing crisis: when there is a "sudden and intense imbalance between housing supply and demand" over a given period of time.

Security of tenure: the legal right to continue living in or using a building, land, etc. that is rented from the owner.

Slums/Informal settlements: a group of houses, blocks of flats, street *etc* where the conditions are dirty and overcrowded and the building(s) *usually* in a bad state. They are part of the inadequate housing (see Act 8 of the **No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing**). While Agenda 2030 refers to "slums", the UN prefers the term "informal settlements" as one that is more in keeping with a human rights-based approach to housing. People living in slums all over the world suffer the most in terms of lack of basic services, dreadful living conditions, high rate of infectious diseases, and crime.

Homelessness: "households without a shelter that would fall within the scope of living quarters. They carry their few possessions with them, sleeping in the streets, in doorways or on piers, or in any other space, on a more or less random basis.".The loss of social connection — the feeling of "belonging nowhere" — and the social exclusion experienced by persons living in homelessness.

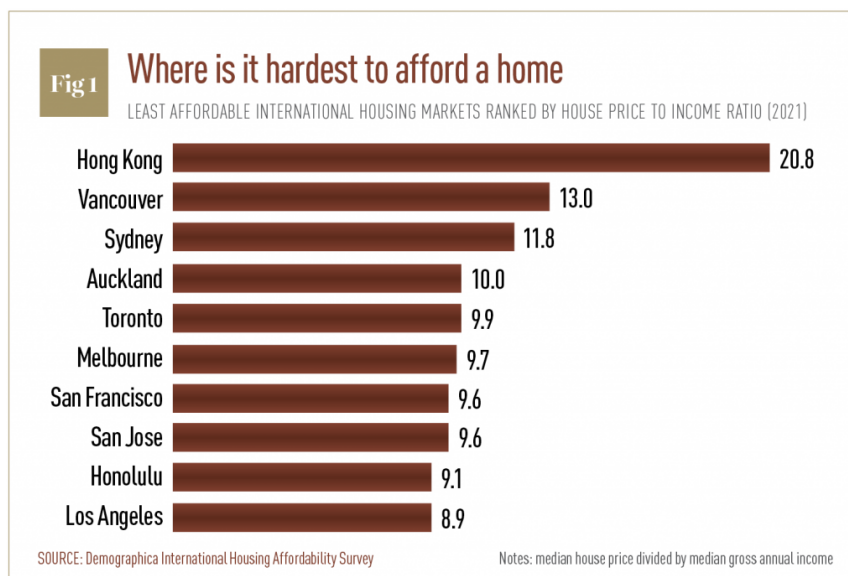
General overview:

A fundamental human requirement is housing. However, a worldwide housing crisis is being fueled by an absence of accessible homes that may be purchased or rented. According to the World Bank, 1.6 billion people would be impacted by the worldwide housing crisis by 2025. According to data from the International Monetary Fund, housing costs have increased more quickly than earnings in the majority of countries. 90% of the 200 cities examined in the survey were found to be expensive to live in, with the average home costing more than three times the average earnings.

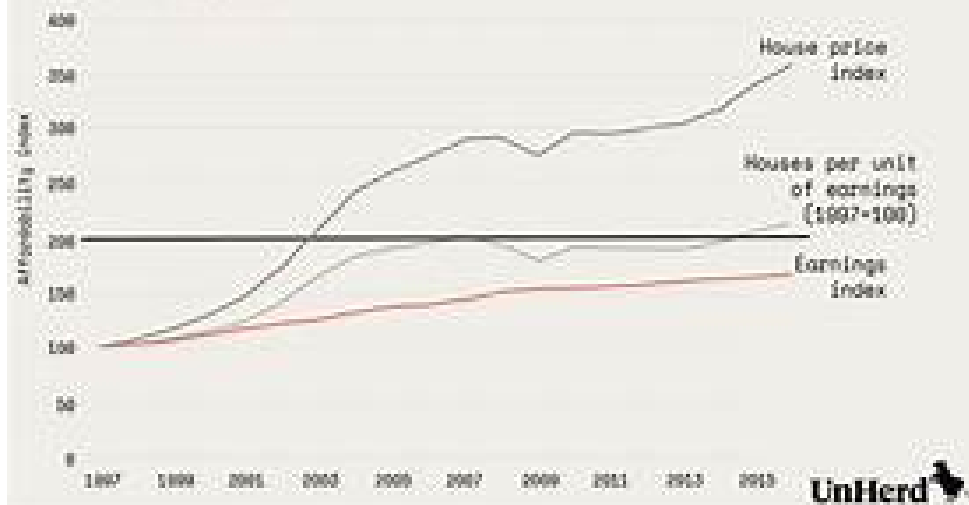
What has caused the housing crisis?

The key factors contributing to the US housing shortfall since the financial crisis in 2008 are a lack of land, lending, labor, and materials, according to a Moody's report. As a result, expenses have increased and builders' profit margins have dropped. According to Moody's Analytics, they have a lower desire to construct new homes, "particularly lower-priced housing with lower margins." The housing situation is thought to have become worse as a result of COVID-19 since renters and buyers seek for larger spaces during lockdowns. This phenomenon has been fueled by historically low interest rates, which make borrowing money affordable in many nations.

People's ability to pay for other necessities like groceries, bills, transportation, and caring for their family is decreasing as a result of rising housing expenses. Consequently, it's more difficult to survive. Homelessness is also encouraged by a lack of affordable housing. According to UN-Habitat, the United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development, 100 million people worldwide do not have a place to call home. And one-fourth of people reside in environments that are dangerous to their health, security, and prosperity. Low-income workers are forced to live further from their places of employment due to a lack of affordable housing, which "demands long and expensive commutes and reduces productivity," according to a report by Moody's Analytics.



Graph 2: Housing affordability 1997-2017



Major actors:

Government and public- sector agencies: While most Governments are involved to some degree in housing construction, the right to adequate housing clearly does not oblige the Government to construct a nation's entire housing stock. It can be implemented through an enabling approach to shelter where the Government, rather than playing the role of housing provider, becomes the facilitator of the actions of all participants in the production and improvement of shelter. The state governments are expected to formulate housing policies and programmes in line with the overall national housing policy.

Private sector: A few large-scale contractors are engaged in nationwide residential provisions.

Households: Individuals and households have in the past constructed more than 70 per cent of the housing stock.

Here is a list of the most concerned States by housing :

- Topping the list among countries having the highest percentage of its urban population living in city slums :

South Sudan at 96%. Second on the list is **Central African Republic** at 93%. Third is **Sudan** at about 92%. Fourth on the list is **Chad** at 88%. Fifth on the list is **Sao Tome and Principe** at about 87%. Sixth on the list is **Guinea-Bissau** at 82%. Seventh on the list is **Mozambique** at 80%. Eighth on the list is **Mauritania** at 80%. Ninth on the list is **Madagascar** at 77%. Tenth on the list is **Sierra Leone** at about 76%. Eleventh on the list is the **Democratic Republic of Congo** at 75%. Twelfth on the list is **Haiti** at 74% while **Ethiopia** at 74% is thirteenth, fourteenth on the list is **Somalia** at 74% and trailing in fifteenth place on the list is **Niger** with about 70%

- Member countries of OECD :

Australia	Finland	Korea	Slovak Republic
Austria	France	Latvia	Slovenia
Belgium	Germany	Lithuania	Spain
Canada	Greece	Luxembourg	Sweden
Chile	Hungary	Mexico	Switzerland
Colombia	Iceland	Netherlands	Türkiye
Costa Rica	Ireland	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Czech Republic	Israel	Norway	United States
Denmark	Italy	Poland	
Estonia	Japan	Portugal	

- Most expensive countries to live in : **Switzerland, Singapore, United States, Ireland, Norway, Luxembourg**

Questions to consider/reflect on:

How does your country fight against the housing crisis?

Are there any associations/organizations engaged in battling this issue?

What are the laws in your country concerning this difficulty?

What's your country's position regarding the issue?

How does your country handle this problem?

Is your country helping other nations in resolving the challenge? How?

Appendix:

List of additional resources :

- <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/292/50/PDF/N1829250.pdf?OpenElement> : UN report
- https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf : Human rights
- https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CESCR/GEC/4759&Lang=e : articles (law)
- <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018/goal-11/> : statistics
- <https://www.oecd.org/social/social-housing-policy-brief-2020.pdf> : Social housing

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<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>
- "Global housing crisis"
<https://www.worldfinance.com/infrastructure-investment/solving-the-global-housing-crisis/>
- "Global housing crisis" <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/06/how-to-fix-global-housing-crisis/>
- "Housing crisis definition" https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Housing_crisis
- "Zoning definition" <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoning>
- "Report on adequate housing"
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/292/50/PDF/N1829250.pdf?OpenElement>
- "Adequate housing"
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CESCR/GEC/4759&Lang=en

- “Definition of a homeless person”
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/homelessness-and-human-rights#homelessness>
- “International Organisation” <https://www.oecd.org/about/>
- “Dictionary” <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
- “National trends in housing-production practices”
<https://www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/library?e=d-00000-00---off-0hdl--00-0----0-10-0---0---0direct-10---4-----0-0l-11-en-50--20-about--00-0-1-00-0--4----0-0-11-10-0utfZz-8-00&cl=CL1.12&d=HASH2fc4be0b5391fe0cf5027a.4.1>=1>
- “Most countries concerned by slums” :
<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/15-countries-where-city-dwellers-are-most-likely-to-live-in-slums.html>
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