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## Highest number of urban homeless in TN

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CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu has the highest number of urban homeless, almost 7.3% of the total homeless population in the country and Chennai houses a three fourths of these, according to the 2001 census.

A recent study on the living conditions of the homeless in Chennai was conducted by the [Indian Community Welfare Organisation](#) (ICWO) and supported by the ministry of external affairs in select pockets of the city like Parrys, Royapuram and [Wall Tax Road](#)

among others. "The study was conducted as a follow up of a more detailed study done in 2003 and we selected habitations from highly populated zones for a comprehensive follow up. Most of the homeless people we identified, almost 53%, are from Zone 2 or Basin Bridge," said Vanessa Peter, program director of Action Aid, an international anti-poverty agency. According to the study which was conducted in 2003, there were over 40,000 homeless in the city and this did not include the migrants. The numbers would have gone up by now, said Peter.

"In spite of a Supreme Court order which states that every city with a population of more than 5 lakh should have at night shelters in the ratio of at least one lakh per population, only one

shelter exists in the entire city which is run by an NGO," said [A J Hariharan](#), founder secretary of the ICWO.

"The homeless or the city makers are the backbone of the city and contribute to the urban local economy and no one would survive without the support of unorganised labour. The government ought to build shelters for them at a place which will not affect their livelihood," said Peter, releasing the sample report on the condition of the homeless in the city. She also said that shifting all the homeless to Kannagi Nagar would rob them of their livelihood and affect the population dependent on them.

Speaking at the event Indu [Prakash Singh](#), technical advisor of Indo-Global Social Service Society, said there was shortage of 24.7 million homes in the country and it was the extremely poor who did not have a house. "The homeless must assert their rights for proper housing. Poverty is a creation of the system and the structure of the society and not the fault of the poor. The homeless must be included in mainstream development by the government," he said.

The report prepared by Action Aid identified 2,545 families and 9,156 individuals practising 196 different forms of informal occupation who were living without a roof over their heads.