

## Homelessness: A product of housing policies and wealth distribution inequality in Karaj Metropolis

Hossein Dehghan<sup>1</sup>  | Nazila Abedian shahraki<sup>2</sup>  | Talieh khademian<sup>3</sup> 

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, North Tehran Azad University, Tehran, Iran. Corresponding Author, E-mail: [dehqan.azad@gmail.com](mailto:dehqan.azad@gmail.com)
2. PhD student, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, North Tehran Azad University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [abedian.nazila@gmail.com](mailto:abedian.nazila@gmail.com)
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, North Tehran Azad University, Tehran, Iran. E-mail: [t-khademian@iau-tnb.ac.ir](mailto:t-khademian@iau-tnb.ac.ir)

Article Info	Extended Abstract
<b>Article type:</b> <b>Research Article</b>	<p><b>Objective</b> This research, focusing on the Karaj metropolis, examines the role of government housing policies and distributive wealth inequality in the formation and continuation of the phenomenon of homelessness. In contrast to common perspectives that view homelessness as a result of individual weakness, inefficiency, or even choice, this study emphasizes structural, social, and economic factors. The importance of this issue stems from the fact that homelessness is not only one of the most prominent indicators of urban poverty but its consequences are also widespread across areas of public health, social security, human dignity, and sustainable development. Due to its geographical and economic position, the Karaj metropolis is a destination for many internal migrants. Rapid urbanization, a lack of affordable housing, weak supportive policies, and an increasing class divide have created conditions that allow this city to become one of the country's main centers for the manifestation of homelessness. The main objective of the research is to identify the direct relationship between the quality and effectiveness of housing policies, on the one hand, and the extent of distributive wealth inequality, on the other, with the rate and severity of homelessness in this city.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> The current study was conducted using a quantitative method with a survey design. The statistical population includes homeless individuals residing in Karaj's shelters (Qods Square, Hesarak Bala, Chamran Park, and Mosalla) as well as individuals living in parks, tents, rented rooms, and graves. The sample size was determined to be 350 people based on the Cochran formula, selected partly through probability cluster sampling and partly through purposive sampling. The data collection tool was a researcher-made questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. Pearson's statistical tests and multivariate regression using SPSS software were used for data analysis. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by expert opinion and preliminary tests, and its reliability was deemed appropriate through Cronbach's Alpha (over 0.8).</p> <p><b>Findings:</b> Based on the descriptive findings of this research, 74 percent of the respondents were male, and women constituted only 23 percent; additionally, 3 percent were reported as transgender. In terms of education, close to 60 percent were below diploma level, indicating a low educational level among the homeless. The dominant age group was between 30 and 50 years, which is associated with the greatest</p>
<b>Article history:</b> Received: 31 - 08 - 2025 Received in revised form: 3 - 10 - 2025 Accepted: 4 - 10 - 2025 Published online: 13- 12 – 2025	
<b>Keywords:</b> <i>Homelessness, Housing Policies, Distributive Wealth Inequality, Class Gap, Social Justice, Karaj Metropolis.</i>	



economic pressure and family responsibilities. Regarding employment status, about 52 percent had a job with variable and unstable income, 22 percent were completely unemployed, and only 20 percent had a stable job. In terms of health status, 45 percent suffered from addiction, nearly 10 percent had mental illnesses, and about 17 percent faced other physical illnesses. This research clearly shows that homelessness is a product of social and economic structures and not merely due to individual weakness or personal choice. This conclusion is consistent with structural-functional theories that analyze poverty and homelessness as functional phenomena within the capitalist system. It also aligns with the Marxist perspective on class conflict and the role of capitalism in reproducing inequality. Moreover, Guy Standing's theory of the "Precariat" is reflected in this research; according to this theory, neoliberal policies and economic globalization have led to the expansion of "precarious work" and a reduction in job and housing security. The research findings also showed that a large segment of the homeless has temporary and unstable jobs, which has stripped them of the ability to secure stable housing. Furthermore, analyzing the results with a Foucauldian approach indicates that the social stigma of homelessness functions as a tool for social control. In this view, the homeless are largely treated as "inefficient and burdensome individuals" rather than victims of unequal economic and social structures. This perception reduces public empathy and leads to the passivity of policymakers.

**Conclusion:** Effective housing policies can play a significant role in reducing homelessness. Programs such as housing price stabilization, rent control, provision of interest-free loans, and special support for vulnerable groups are among the effective policies. A combination of structural and supportive measures is necessary to confront this crisis, including: the construction of affordable housing and stable financing for low-income groups, strengthening welfare policies and job skills training, and the cooperation of the government, civil institutions, and the private sector to reduce the class gap and the continuous collection and analysis of data for more precise planning. Overall, it can be stated that homelessness in the Karaj metropolis is not an individual phenomenon but a direct result of social inequality and weak housing policies. To mitigate this problem, a change in the approach to housing policies and a more equitable redistribution of resources are necessary. The experience of Karaj can be a model for other Iranian cities facing a similar challenge. Finally, only through structural reforms and the reinforcement of justice-oriented policies can effective steps be taken toward reducing homelessness.

**Cite this article:** Dehghan., H., Abedian shahraki, N., & khademian, T. (2025). Homelessness: A product of housing policies and wealth distribution inequality in Karaj Metropolis. *Biopolitics and Development*, 1 (3), 31-48. DOI: [10.22034/jbpd.2025.144431.1022](https://doi.org/10.22034/jbpd.2025.144431.1022)

DOI: [10.22034/jbpd.2025.144431.1022](https://doi.org/10.22034/jbpd.2025.144431.1022)



© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Kurdistan Press.