

A Bibliometric Analysis Mapping the Evolving Research Landscape of Homelessness and Urban Security

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1 ABSTRACT

The relationship between homelessness and urban security is a complex and multifaceted global issue. In many cities, visible homelessness can influence public perceptions of disorder and insecurity, perpetuating cycles of marginalization, criminalization, and social exclusion for those experiencing homelessness. At the same time, homelessness is often a direct consequence of insecurity, driven by factors such as violence, displacement, and economic instability. This study seeks to deepen the understanding of this intricate interplay by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scholarly literature on homelessness and urban security. Utilizing the Scopus database and VOSviewer software, the research systematically investigates past, present, and emerging trends within this field. The analysis focuses on co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence patterns, and citation trajectories to achieve three primary objectives: (1) identify key research themes and trends, (2) map the intellectual structure of the field, and (3) pinpoint influential scholars and institutions shaping the discourse. The findings will offer critical insights into the current state of knowledge on homelessness and urban security, highlighting significant research gaps and underexplored areas. By uncovering the intellectual foundations and evolving priorities of this field, the study aims to inform future research directions and provide evidence-based recommendations for urban planning and policy development on a global scale. This work underscores the importance of addressing homelessness not merely as a social issue but as a critical component of urban security and sustainable urban development.

Keywords: homelessness, urban security, bibliometric analysis, Scopus database, urban planning

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The relationship between homelessness and urban security is a complex and multifaceted global issue. In many cities, visible homelessness can influence public perceptions of disorder and insecurity, perpetuating cycles of marginalization, criminalization, and social exclusion for those experiencing homelessness. At the same time, homelessness is often a direct consequence of insecurity, driven by factors such as violence, displacement, and economic instability. This study seeks to deepen the understanding of this intricate interplay by conducting a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scholarly literature on homelessness and urban security. Utilizing the Scopus database and VOSviewer software, the research systematically investigates past, present, and emerging trends within this field. The analysis focuses on co-authorship networks, keyword co-occurrence patterns, and citation trajectories to achieve three primary objectives: (1) identify key research themes and trends, (2) map the intellectual structure of the field, and (3) pinpoint influential scholars and institutions shaping the discourse. By uncovering the intellectual foundations and evolving priorities of this field, the study aims to inform future research directions and provide evidence-based recommendations for urban planning and policy development on a global scale.

This work underscores the importance of addressing homelessness not merely as a social issue but as a critical component of urban security and sustainable urban development. The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide critical insights into the intersection of homelessness and urban security, which remains an underexplored yet essential issue in contemporary urban research and policy-making. Homelessness is often perceived as a problem relegated to the margins of urban spaces, yet its impacts on both individuals and communities extend far beyond the personal hardships of those affected. By linking homelessness to urban security, this research brings attention to the broader socio-political and economic structures that contribute to urban vulnerability, marginalization, and exclusion. Furthermore, this paper aims to make a significant contribution to the field of homelessness and urban security by developing a conceptual

framework that deepens the understanding of the intricate and often underexplored relationship between these two critical urban issues.

3 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HOMELESSNESS AND URBAN SECURITY

Homelessness is a multi-dimensional problem that is deeply embedded within broader societal structures. It is often linked to issues such as poverty, unemployment, housing shortages, mental illness, substance abuse, and, crucially, urban policies that fail to address the needs of vulnerable populations (Fitzpatrick, 2018). In many cities, homelessness is seen through the lens of disorder and criminality, leading to stigmatization and the implementation of policies that criminalize homelessness rather than addressing its root causes. The dynamics of homelessness and urban security are shaped by multiple factors, including social, political, economic, and environmental influences, all of which contribute to the vulnerability and exclusion of homeless individuals (Sosin & Pollack, 2020). Globally, the challenge of homelessness is a pressing issue in both developed and developing nations. The United Nations has estimated that over 150 million people worldwide experience homelessness, with many more living in precarious housing situations (UN-Habitat, 2020). In cities across the globe, homelessness is a visible sign of urban inequality and insecurity, and it is often linked to rising levels of poverty, displacement, and conflict (Shinn & Khadduri, 2020). In the Global South, cities are grappling with rapid urbanization, slum development, and a lack of affordable housing, all of which contribute to high rates of homelessness (Afsar et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in the Global North, while homelessness rates may be lower, the visibility of homelessness in wealthy cities often exacerbates public concerns about disorder and crime, leading to more punitive measures against homeless populations (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2021).

For example, in the United States, homelessness is largely understood as a consequence of economic insecurity, with homelessness rates sharply rising during times of recession. The criminalization of homelessness is prevalent, with homeless individuals facing frequent arrests for “quality of life” offenses such as loitering or trespassing (Hopper, 2020). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the rise in homelessness has been attributed to a combination of austerity policies, a lack of affordable housing, and cuts to social services (Pleace, 2019). The United Nations (2020) reports that homelessness is increasingly seen as a violation of human rights, with homeless people experiencing disproportionate levels of violence, abuse, and discrimination, further compounding their vulnerability in urban settings. In the Global South, the relationship between homelessness and urban security is particularly complex, with urban poverty and informal housing systems playing a central role. In African cities, the rapid growth of urban populations combined with inadequate urban planning has led to the proliferation of informal settlements and increased homelessness. In cities like Johannesburg and Nairobi, homelessness is often a direct result of economic displacement, lack of affordable housing, and the failure of governments to address the needs of marginalized populations (UN-Habitat, 2018). Informal settlements, which are characterized by inadequate housing, poor sanitation, and limited access to basic services, often become hotspots for insecurity and violence, further exacerbating the marginalization of homeless individuals (López-Morales, 2020).

Furthermore, in many African countries, economic instability and political violence have contributed to rising levels of displacement, both internally and across borders, creating a growing homeless population in urban centers (Hardoy et al., 2020). These conditions are compounded by the widespread criminalization of homelessness, as homeless individuals are often subjected to police harassment, forced eviction, and exclusion from public spaces, which only deepens their vulnerability (Lall, 2019). As a result, the intersection of homelessness and urban security in the Global South reflects a vicious cycle of marginalization, insecurity, and exclusion, which demands urgent attention from both policymakers and researchers. In South Africa, homelessness is a major urban challenge that reflects deep-rooted social and economic inequalities. The legacy of apartheid, which systematically excluded black South Africans from access to land, housing, and resources, has left a lasting impact on the urban landscape, particularly in major cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town (Ntsimane, 2018). While South Africa has made significant strides in addressing housing needs through policies such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the country continues to face a growing homelessness crisis. This is largely due to factors such as rapid urbanization, inadequate public housing provision, and a rising unemployment rate (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

Homelessness in South African cities is also deeply intertwined with issues of urban security. In many urban areas, the presence of homeless individuals in public spaces is often viewed as a threat to security, leading to the criminalization and policing of homelessness (Olivier & Riemer, 2019). As public perceptions of insecurity rise, policymakers often resort to short-term, punitive measures such as the eviction of homeless people from public areas or the implementation of anti-loitering laws. These actions further contribute to the exclusion and stigmatization of homeless individuals, who are already vulnerable to violence and exploitation in urban spaces (Berg, 2021). Recent literature on homelessness and urban security highlights several key themes and emerging trends. One of the most prominent trends is the increasing recognition of homelessness as a human rights issue, with calls for policies that prioritize the dignity and well-being of homeless populations rather than focusing solely on criminalization (Fitzpatrick et al., 2013). Additionally, there is growing recognition of the role that urban planning and policy interventions can play in addressing homelessness, with researchers advocating for more inclusive and sustainable urban development models that prioritize affordable housing, public space access, and social services for marginalized communities (Turok, 2019).

However, despite these advancements, significant research gaps remain. There is a need for more studies that explore the relationship between homelessness and urban security in different geographical contexts, particularly in the Global South, where issues of displacement, informal settlements, and inadequate housing systems continue to drive homelessness. Moreover, the intersection of homelessness with other urban issues, such as crime, mental health, and substance abuse, remains underexplored and warrants further investigation. This is where this study intends to contribute.

4 METHODOLOGY

This study aims to deepen the understanding of the relationship between homelessness and urban security through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scholarly literature. The review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol to ensure a rigorous and transparent process for selecting and analyzing relevant publications. A comprehensive search was conducted in the Scopus database on 11 February 2025, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference papers. The key search terms used was "homelessness AND urban security". The Scopus database was selected as the primary source for this study due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature across various disciplines, including urban planning, architecture, sociology, and cultural studies (Bass et al., 2020). The process followed is detailed in the diagram below:

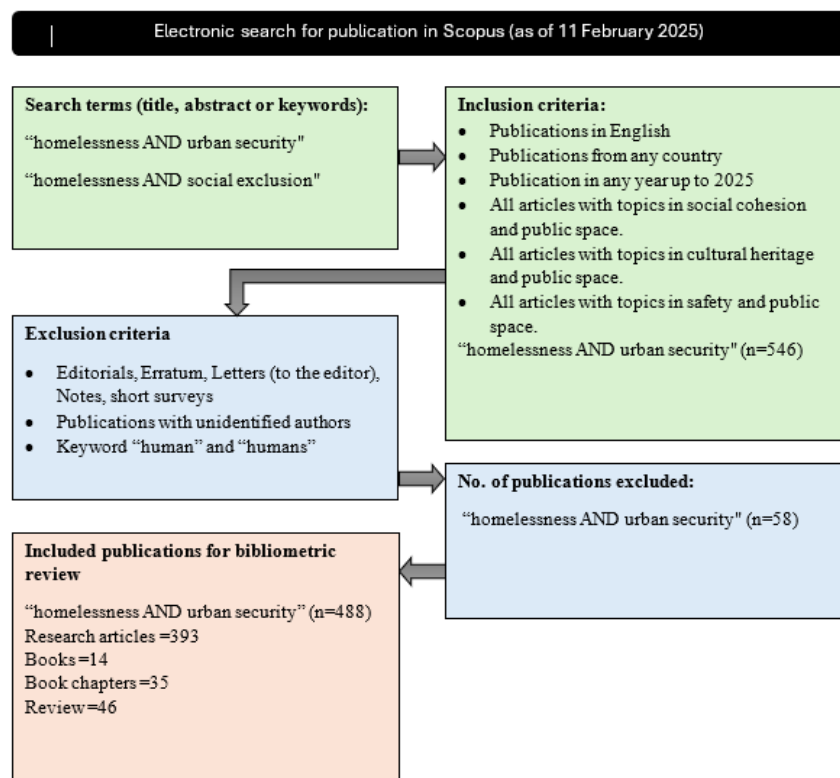


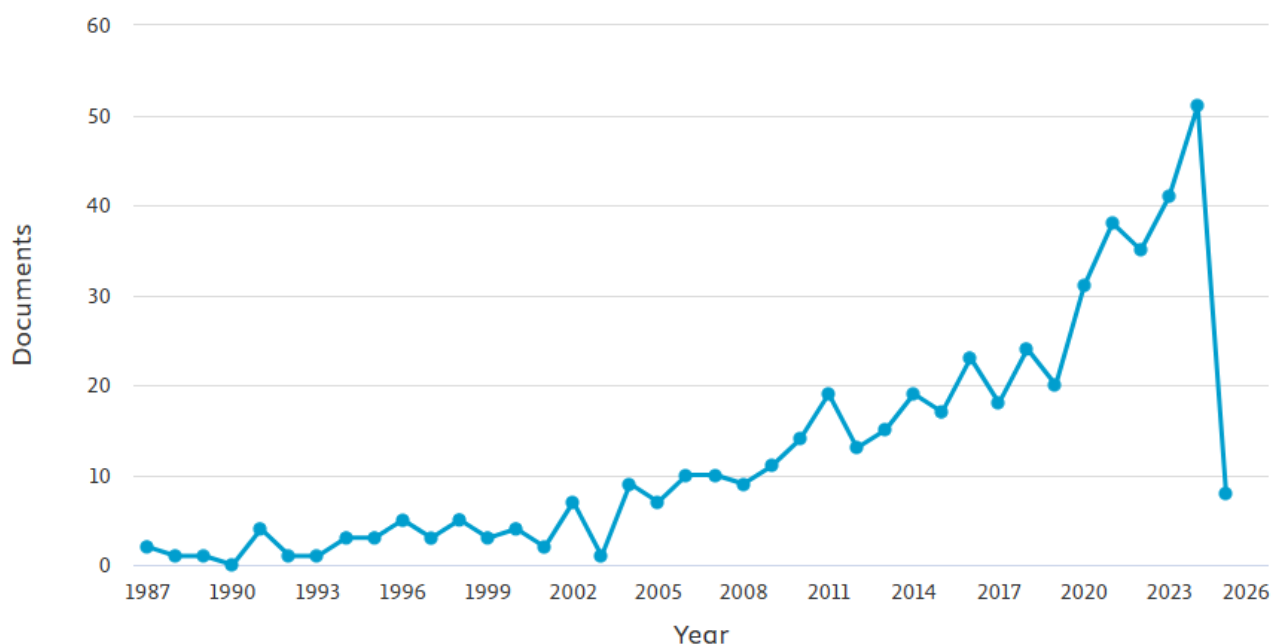
Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram (Adapted from Moher et al., 2016)

The initial search yielded 546 publications on homelessness and urban security. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 58 publications were excluded, leaving a total of 488 eligible documents to be considered as part of the bibliometric analysis. VOSviewer was utilized to conduct the bibliometric analysis, as outlined in the figure below (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). VOSviewer is a software tool that visually analyzes literature reviews, identifying trends, research foci, and key areas (Zhang et al., 2021). While other analysis tools like Citespace have been used in other studies, VOS viewer remains the preferred choice due to its ability to handle large datasets and produce reliable results (Kalaoane et al., 2024).

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

5.1 Publication trends

The graph representing publication trends on homelessness and urban security over nearly four decades reveals distinct fluctuations that warrant careful examination. From 1987 to the early 2000s, the number of publications in this field remained relatively low, indicating a nascent stage of research output. The early years of this period could reflect the challenges associated with the study of homelessness and urban security, both of which are complex, multifaceted issues often shaped by socio-economic, political, and cultural factors (Pritzker & Pascoe, 2020). During this time, homelessness was likely treated as a peripheral issue within urban studies, and research on the topic may not have been as prioritized or funded as other urban phenomena (United Nations, 2019).



However, from 2002 onwards, there is a notable surge in the number of publications, suggesting a significant shift in the research landscape. This escalation could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, an increase in research funding dedicated to urban studies and social issues, such as homelessness, likely played a significant role in this growth. Increased interest in urban security and homelessness can also be linked to technological advancements in data collection and analysis, which enabled researchers to study these issues more effectively (Fink & Freedman, 2022). For instance, the availability of satellite imagery, social media data, and geographic information systems (GIS) may have provided new insights into the spatial distribution of homelessness and urban safety, fueling academic interest (Fink & Freedman, 2022). Additionally, the early 2000s coincided with a heightened global awareness of social inequalities and urban poverty, which would have led to increased public and governmental interest in homelessness (Pritzker & Pascoe, 2020).

Moreover, international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank began publishing extensive reports on urbanization and poverty, contributing to a more focused academic and policy-driven dialogue on urban security and homelessness. This increased focus on policy relevance and the importance of addressing homelessness through systemic change likely spurred more researchers to engage with the

issue (United Nations, 2019). The significant rise in publications during this period is thus likely a result of a combination of institutional support, technological advancements, and a broader social agenda centered on poverty alleviation and social justice (Pritzker & Pascoe, 2020). The graph also reveals a plateau in publications after the initial surge, followed by a further escalation, reflecting the continued expansion of research in this area. This could point to an increased institutional recognition of the need for research on urban security as cities around the world faced growing challenges related to homelessness, particularly as urbanization rates soared. Researchers may have been spurred by the need for evidence-based policy solutions in the face of ongoing urbanization and the global housing crisis, as well as increasing concerns about social instability and security in metropolitan regions (Fink & Freedman, 2022).

Nevertheless, the most recent data point reveals a sharp decline in publications, which presents a critical opportunity for further inquiry into potential contributing factors. Several explanations can be posited for this downturn. One possible factor could be a shift in research priorities, where funding bodies and academic institutions may have reoriented their focus toward other pressing global issues, such as climate change, pandemics, or economic crises (Fink & Freedman, 2022). Moreover, the decline may reflect the limitations of existing funding sources, which could have been affected by global economic downturns, leading to fewer resources available for research on homelessness and urban security. A potential, albeit significant, factor in this decline could be the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused widespread interruptions to academic research across all fields, with many research projects delayed, paused, or canceled entirely. Homelessness became an even more pressing issue during the pandemic as vulnerable populations were disproportionately affected by the virus, leading to an influx of governmental and NGO interventions. However, the pandemic may have also reshaped the research agenda, drawing attention away from long-standing issues and towards the immediate public health crisis, further compounding the decline in publications (Fink & Freedman, 2022).

5.2 Keyword Analysis

The network visualization presented provides a powerful tool for understanding the intricate relationships between key concepts related to homelessness and urban security. The map's structure, where nodes represent individual concepts and edges denote their co-occurrence, offers a snapshot of how these issues are interconnected. By identifying clusters of related themes, such as housing, food security, and demographic factors, the map facilitates a comprehensive view of the multifaceted nature of homelessness and urban security.

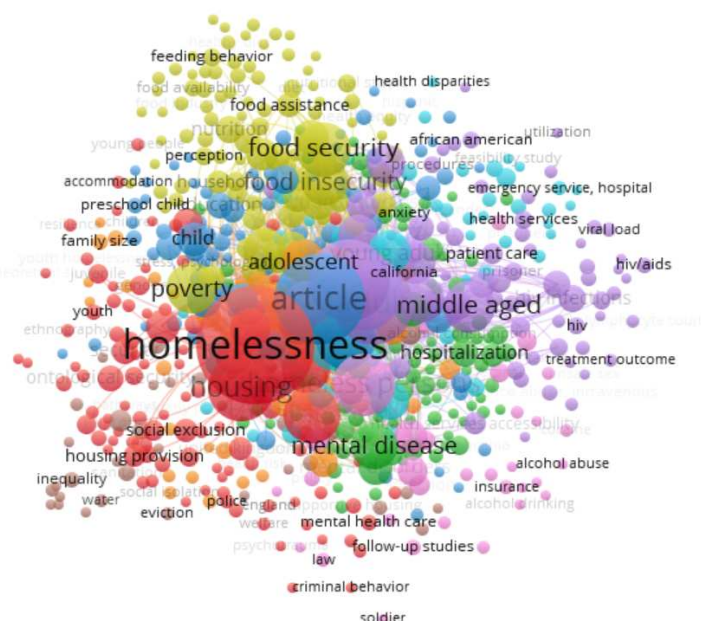


Figure 2: A co-occurrence network analysis of keywords on homelessness and urban security research.

The analysis emphasizes the prominence of central nodes such as "homelessness," "mental disease," "food security," and "poverty," noting their role as key themes that bridge multiple aspects of social vulnerability. These findings align with existing literature that highlights how homelessness, mental health issues, and

poverty form a cycle of disadvantage, reinforcing each other and exacerbating the challenges faced by vulnerable populations (Desmond & Shyr, 2014). The interconnections between these nodes are significant because they underscore the complexity of these issues. For instance, homelessness is not only a housing issue but is deeply entwined with mental health disorders and poverty, as individuals experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer from mental health conditions and face greater barriers to economic mobility. While the centrality of these concepts is valid and reflective of current research, the network visualization may also oversimplify the intricate dynamics at play. It is crucial to consider that these relationships are not always linear or static. For example, the link between homelessness and mental health is well-established, but the nature of this relationship can vary depending on individual circumstances, such as the duration of homelessness, access to mental health services, and the presence of other social supports (Padgett et al., 2016). The visualization's inability to capture the directionality or causal pathways between nodes limits its ability to fully represent the complexity of these interactions.

The map's inclusion of food security as a central concept further illustrates the interconnectedness of social determinants. Research indicates that food insecurity is not only a consequence of poverty but also a driver of poor health outcomes, particularly for marginalized groups (Gundersen et al., 2018). The co-occurrence of food security with homelessness and mental health reflects this cyclical vulnerability, where inadequate access to nutritious food exacerbates both physical and mental health conditions, further entrenching poverty and homelessness. However, the visualization may not adequately account for the role of food assistance programs and social safety nets in mitigating these impacts. The connections in the map suggest a relationship between food security and food availability, but they do not offer insights into the effectiveness of interventions such as food banks or government programs in alleviating food insecurity. The presence of demographic factors, such as "African American," "adolescent," "child," and "middle-aged," is a critical aspect of the visualization, drawing attention to the disproportionate impact of these issues on specific populations. This aligns with extensive research on the social determinants of health, which highlights how race, age, and socio-economic status intersect to create unique vulnerabilities (Kawachi et al., 2017). For example, African Americans are more likely to experience homelessness and food insecurity, which can be attributed to historical and structural inequalities in access to resources and opportunities. The inclusion of these demographic factors is vital for informing targeted, equity-focused interventions, but the network map may not fully capture the intersectionality of these populations. A more nuanced approach might consider how overlapping identities – such as race, gender, and disability – shape individuals' experiences of homelessness and urban insecurity.

Furthermore, the visualization's focus on healthcare access and utilization is crucial for understanding how these social vulnerabilities impact health outcomes. As highlighted in the analysis, healthcare access is a key determinant of well-being for those experiencing homelessness or food insecurity. However, the map does not delve into the specific barriers to healthcare that these populations face, such as lack of insurance, transportation issues, or stigma. A more detailed examination of healthcare access could reveal important insights into how systemic barriers exacerbate health disparities among these vulnerable groups. From an urban planning perspective, this analysis is important as planners are tasked with addressing multifaceted issues, such as housing insecurity, poverty, food security, and healthcare access, all of which are interlinked and have profound implications for public health and social equity (Kawachi et al., 2017). By understanding these interconnections, planners can design more holistic and inclusive urban policies and infrastructure that address the root causes of homelessness and urban insecurity.

5.3 Top countries and scholars publishing research on homelessness and urban security

The analysis of publication trends on homelessness and urban security reveals significant variation across countries, with some nations exhibiting higher output and influence in this field. The United States stands as the dominant contributor, with 214 publications, 5243 citations, and the highest total link strength (26). This prominence can be attributed to the scale of homelessness in American cities, where the issue has been the focus of extensive academic and policy attention. The U.S. has numerous research institutions and a well-funded research environment, with government bodies like the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) driving major studies on homelessness. Furthermore, the "Housing First" model has become a leading intervention, stimulating substantial academic and policy discourse (Padgett et al., 2016). Canada's rising output (78 publications, 2102 citations, and a total link strength of 19) also reflects a strong

policy focus on affordable housing, poverty reduction, and homelessness prevention. The Canadian government's National Housing Strategy, launched in 2017, further fueled interest in the issue, with scholars addressing the intersections of homelessness, mental health, and housing affordability, particularly among marginalized groups such as Indigenous communities (Gaetz et al., 2019).

Country	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
United States	214	5243	26
Canada	78	2102	19
Australia	66	749	13
United Kingdom	45	907	10
France	9	83	7
Netherlands	10	75	7
Ireland	11	65	6
Germany	7	27	5

Australia ranks third with 66 publications, 749 citations, and a total link strength of 13. In Australia, research on homelessness has gained momentum as urban areas such as Sydney and Melbourne have faced housing affordability crises. Researchers in Australia have focused on the resilience of urban areas, the impact of welfare systems, and the role of social safety nets in addressing homelessness. The increasing attention to climate change's impact on homelessness, particularly in Australian cities, has further propelled this research (Beer et al., 2011). The United Kingdom, with 45 publications, 907 citations, and a total link strength of 10, has similarly been a key player in the field. The UK's focus on housing instability, welfare reform, and austerity measures has led to significant academic contributions, exploring the link between housing policies, homelessness, and social exclusion (Pleace et al., 2019). Despite its lower citation count compared to the U.S. and Canada, the UK continues to influence international research on urban housing markets and homelessness prevention. Smaller contributors to the global research landscape include France, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Germany. France (9 publications, 83 citations, and a total link strength of 7) has a more centralized welfare approach, which may contribute to the lower visibility of homelessness in research. However, the issue has gained increasing attention in urban areas like Paris, with scholars investigating housing policies and the effectiveness of homelessness interventions (Baptista, 2015). The Netherlands (10 publications, 75 citations, and a total link strength of 7) also has a robust social safety net, leading to a relatively lower research output on homelessness, but a growing focus on housing issues in cities like Amsterdam is evident.

Similarly, Ireland's research on homelessness has intensified in response to the housing crisis, particularly following the 2008 financial crisis, which led to rising housing costs and increasing visibility of homelessness (Hennessy & Neri, 2019). Germany (7 publications, 27 citations, and a total link strength of 5) has comparatively low levels of visible homelessness due to its public housing system, but rising concerns over housing affordability in cities like Berlin have led to growing interest in urban housing and homelessness research (Wolch et al., 2014). The dominance of countries like the United States, Canada, and Australia in publications on homelessness and urban security is driven by the high visibility of homelessness in major urban centers, the scale of the problem, and significant funding directed toward social policy research. These countries are actively engaged in policy experimentation and international collaborations, contributing to the high citation counts. Conversely, countries such as France, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Germany, with lower publication outputs, have policies that have traditionally been more effective in mitigating homelessness, which may explain the more recent emergence of academic interest in these nations. However, the increasing citation counts in these countries signal a growing recognition of homelessness as a critical urban issue, and future research from these regions is expected to expand as urban vulnerabilities rise globally.

The analysis of top authors in publications on homelessness and urban security reveals diverse themes and research focuses that shape our understanding of the issue. The authors listed are contributing to the body of work that addresses the social, economic, and health-related aspects of homelessness, urban security, and vulnerability. Some of the key themes explored by these scholars include health outcomes, interventions, housing policies, and demographic disparities, all critical to urban planning and social policy. Catherine Hastings explores the social determinants of homelessness, particularly housing instability and its connection to public health, with a focus on race, gender, and economic status (Hastings, 2013). Stephen W. Hwang examines the health risks associated with homelessness, emphasizing mental health and chronic conditions, and advocating for integrated care models (Hwang, 2001). Thomas Kerr investigates policy interventions, especially housing-first strategies, and their effects on homelessness (Kerr et al., 2013), while Paula Mayock

addresses the gendered dimensions of homelessness, particularly for young people and women (Mayock et al., 2014). Cameron Parsell focuses on housing policy and the stigma surrounding homelessness, advocating for integrated services and public education (Parsell, 2018). Marc I. Rosen and Robert Rosenheck explore the relationship between homelessness, mental health, and substance abuse, with a particular focus on institutional and veteran-related issues (Rosen et al., 2012; Rosenheck et al., 2013). Chery Smith emphasizes the role of social determinants of health, including housing and healthcare access (Smith, 2010), while Wendy Stone examines the socio-legal aspects of homelessness, highlighting the importance of legal frameworks and protections for homeless individuals (Stone, 2015). These authors' work collectively informs policy and interventions aimed at addressing the multifaceted nature of homelessness.

Author	Documents	Citations
Catherine Hastings	4	19
Stephen W. Hwang	4	84
Thomas Kerr	5	135
Paula Mayock	4	14
Cameron Parsell	4	42
Marc I. Rosen	6	76
Robert Rosenheck	4	88
Chery Smith	5	199
Wendy Stone	4	27

6 CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS: TOWARDS A HOMELESSNESS AND URBAN SECURITY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Considering the key themes and research gaps from the bibliometric analysis. A conceptual framework is proposed in order to deepen the understanding of the intricate and often underexplored relationship between these two critical urban issues. The key components of the framework are: housing instability and security, social determinants of health and well-being, the role of policy interventions, intersectionality and vulnerable populations, urban safety and crime prevention, intersectionality and vulnerable populations, urban safety and crime prevention and healthcare access and urban security. Homelessness and urban security are interconnected urban challenges that, though often studied separately, share overlapping factors. This framework explores the complex relationship between these issues, highlighting how housing instability, social determinants of health, policy interventions, and urban safety influence vulnerable populations. Housing instability is central, as inadequate housing and poor conditions contribute to both homelessness and urban insecurity (Hwang, 2001; Desmond, 2016). Social determinants like income inequality, access to healthcare, and social exclusion further exacerbate vulnerabilities, making homeless individuals more susceptible to crime and violence (Gundersen et al., 2018; Rosenheck, 2013).



Policy interventions, including housing-first models, are critical in addressing homelessness and improving security, while policies criminalizing homelessness can worsen urban insecurity (Kerr et al., 2013; Smith, 2010). Intersectionality is key in understanding how race, gender, and other factors shape experiences of homelessness and security, requiring tailored interventions for different vulnerable groups (Mayock et al., 2014; Rosenheck et al., 2013). Urban safety concerns, such as crime and stigmatization, are also intertwined with homelessness, necessitating a balanced approach that addresses both causes and effects (Rosen, 2012; Desmond & Shyr, 2014). Finally, improving healthcare access for the homeless, particularly mental health and substance abuse treatment, is essential for enhancing both individual well-being and urban security (Hwang, 2001). The framework presents these elements as interconnected components, with housing instability at the center, linked to social factors, policies, and public safety.

In conclusion, this study has explored the multifaceted nature of homelessness and urban security, proposing a comprehensive conceptual framework that incorporates various dimensions such as housing instability, mental health, poverty, policy interventions, and intersectionality. By integrating these factors, the framework highlights the complex, interconnected nature of homelessness and emphasizes the importance of a holistic, integrated approach to addressing this pressing urban issue. The findings from the bibliometric analysis underscore the critical role of health, policy, and social determinants in shaping homelessness outcomes, aligning well with the proposed framework. Furthermore, addressing homelessness requires more than just providing shelter; it demands a systemic approach that integrates housing solutions with healthcare, social services, and supportive policies. Urban planning must prioritize affordable housing, targeted interventions for vulnerable populations, and multi-agency collaboration to create supportive environments for the homeless. Research in this area should continue to explore the effectiveness of policy interventions and the lived experiences of marginalized groups to refine approaches that promote long-term solutions. By adopting the recommendations derived from this framework, cities can make meaningful strides in reducing homelessness, enhancing urban security, and ensuring that all residents have access to the resources they need for a dignified and secure life. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the structural factors driving homelessness and offers actionable insights for both policy and practice, with the potential to influence urban planning and research directions in the future.

6.1 Practical applications of the bibliometric review and future directions

The bibliometric analysis of homelessness and urban security offers significant practical insights beyond fulfilling formal scientific publication criteria. By systematically mapping the evolution of research trends, thematic networks, and influential contributions, this analysis provides an empirical foundation for understanding the intellectual landscape of homelessness and urban security. Importantly, it highlights key knowledge gaps, emerging themes, and policy-relevant discussions that can inform future research, urban planning strategies, and governance frameworks. One of the primary contributions of this bibliometric analysis is its ability to trace the historical trajectory of research on homelessness and urban security. The identification of shifts in publication trends, particularly the surge in research output after 2002, underscores the growing recognition of homelessness as a critical urban issue influenced by policy shifts, technological advancements, and global socio-economic transformations (Pritzker & Pascoe, 2020; United Nations, 2019). These shifts are particularly relevant to urban planning, where historical insights help policymakers and planners understand how previous interventions have shaped contemporary urban challenges. For instance, neoliberal urban policies have played a crucial role in shaping homelessness through processes of gentrification, exclusionary zoning, and the privatization of public spaces (Smith, 2002; Lees, 2014). By demonstrating how these external factors shape scholarly attention, the analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between research, policy, and urban governance. Furthermore, the observed decline in recent publications raises important questions about shifts in research funding, academic priorities, and the impact of global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on knowledge production (Fink & Freedman, 2022). This is particularly critical for urban planning, as the pandemic has exacerbated housing insecurity and challenged traditional planning paradigms. The need for resilient, inclusive, and equitable urban policies has become more pressing than ever, making continued research on homelessness and urban security a necessity rather than an academic afterthought (Bhan et al., 2020).

The keyword analysis further strengthens the practical relevance of this study by revealing thematic interconnections that are essential for evidence-based policymaking and urban planning. By identifying

dominant themes such as housing insecurity, mental health, food security, and urban crime, the analysis underscores the complexity of homelessness as a multidimensional phenomenon (Desmond & Shyr, 2014; Padgett et al., 2016). This co-occurrence mapping is particularly valuable for urban planners, who must navigate the interdependence of social, economic, and environmental factors when designing cities. Incorporating themes such as “housing insecurity” and “urban crime” into planning strategies enables the development of holistic, place-based interventions that extend beyond traditional approaches like emergency shelters or policing. For example, the rise of “Housing First” policies, which prioritize stable housing as a prerequisite for addressing other social issues, aligns with the recognition that secure, affordable, and well-integrated housing solutions are more effective than punitive or temporary measures (Tsemberis, 2010). The keyword analysis also points to the importance of mixed-use developments, public space activation, and pedestrian-friendly urban design in fostering inclusive urban environments that reduce homelessness-related vulnerabilities (Gehl, 2011).

Another critical contribution of this bibliometric review lies in its analysis of national and institutional research trends. The dominance of publications from the United States, Canada, and Australia highlights the role of national policy frameworks, research funding, and institutional capacities in shaping knowledge production (Gaetz et al., 2019; Padgett et al., 2016). This geographic mapping is crucial for urban planning because it exposes disparities in research attention and policy innovation. While cities in the Global North have implemented advanced urban design interventions – such as inclusive zoning laws, transit-oriented development, and social housing programs – many urban centers in the Global South continue to grapple with informal settlements, inadequate infrastructure, and limited research capacity (Parnell & Pieterse, 2014). Understanding these global trends is vital for urban planners, particularly in cities with high levels of informality, where conventional planning approaches may not be applicable. For example, African cities like Johannesburg and Nairobi require urban strategies that integrate informal settlements into formal planning frameworks rather than perpetuating exclusionary policies that displace vulnerable populations (Huchzermeyer, 2011). Insights from this bibliometric analysis can therefore guide comparative urban policy studies, fostering cross-regional learning and adaptive planning strategies that prioritize housing justice and inclusive urban design.

The bibliometric analysis also provides a foundation for conceptual advancements by informing the development of an integrated framework for homelessness and urban security. The proposed conceptual model, which includes dimensions such as housing instability, social determinants of health, policy interventions, and urban crime prevention, offers a structured approach for future research and policy formulation. This theoretical contribution goes beyond mere documentation of existing research trends by synthesizing fragmented knowledge into a cohesive analytical framework (Hwang, 2001; Gundersen et al., 2018). For urban planners, such a framework can serve as a tool for designing inclusive urban policies that account for the socio-spatial dynamics of homelessness. The framework emphasizes the importance of participatory planning, where affected communities are actively involved in decision-making processes related to housing and public space management (Healey, 1997). Additionally, it reinforces the role of spatial justice – ensuring that marginalized populations have equitable access to urban resources, mobility networks, and social infrastructure (Soja, 2010).

Finally, the analysis enhances knowledge translation by making complex academic trends accessible to non-academic stakeholders, including urban planners, policymakers, and community organizations. Given that planners often operate within politically charged environments, where economic interests and social justice goals may conflict, having empirically grounded insights is crucial for advocating progressive urban policies. In conclusion, while bibliometric analyses are sometimes critiqued for being purely formal exercises, this study demonstrates substantial added value in terms of content and practical relevance to urban planning. It provides a historical perspective on research evolution, identifies critical thematic linkages, maps global research contributions, proposes a conceptual framework, and enhances knowledge accessibility for urban planners and policymakers. As homelessness and urban security remain pressing global issues, such analyses are essential in guiding future research agendas, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and informing evidence-based urban planning interventions.

7 REFERENCES

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