Understanding the Dynamics of One-person Households in India

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the evolving scenario of one-person households in India, examining trends, regional disparities, and socio-economic factors influencing their prevalence. The study, spanning from 1992 to 2021, reveals distinct patterns across states, emphasizing the necessity of region-specific interventions. The persistent rural-urban divide highlights the complex interplay between urbanisation, economic change, and cultural dynamics. Socio-economic variables such as household wealth and educational levels are investigated for their relationship with one-person households, providing insights into the factors influencing household structures. Age and gender dynamics emerge as critical determinants, emphasising the unique challenges faced by the elderly and women in one-person households. Marital status significantly influences interventions for widowed, divorced, and never-married individuals, with implications for tailored interventions. The findings contribute not only to academic understanding but also offer practical implications for policymakers. The research suggests targeted interventions for specific regions, emphasising the creation of inclusive urban spaces, equitable economic policies, and support systems tailored to age, gender, and marital status.

KEYWORDS: one-person, single-person, solo living, living alone, living arrangement.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the household life cycle phases is related to running a household by a one-person (Piekut, 2020). A one-person household consists of one person living alone in their own separate housing unit. Several decades ago, when several generations formed a household, one-person households were rare. The number of multigenerational households has significantly decreased, and joint families are disintegrating earlier than ever before (Srivastava et al., 2021). Because of changes in the family model and the impact of other demographic and socio-economic issues, one-person households are becoming more common.

The landscape of household structures in India is undergoing a transformative shift, marked prominently by the emergence and evolution of one-person households. As urbanisation, economic opportunities, and social dynamics continue to reshape the fabric of Indian society, understanding the intricacies of this growing demographic becomes imperative. The phenomenon of individuals living alone carries profound implications for societal structures, family dynamics, and the well-being of those navigating this lifestyle.

As India undergoes rapid socio-economic transformations, a thorough examination of the dynamics of one-person households becomes not only relevant but also critical for envisioning inclusive and responsive social policies. This study, therefore, serves as a critical exploration into an evolving aspect of Indian society, shedding light on the intricacies of individuals living alone and their broader societal implications.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Household size studies are a crucial area of research in countries with declining population growth, as they significantly influence changes in living arrangements. In many parts of the world, the one-person household is the most rapidly expanding type of household (Hall et al., 1997; Jamieson & Simpson, 2013; Klinenberg, 2012; Kramarow, 1995; Ogden & Hall, 2004; Ogden & Schnoebelen, 2005; Stone et al., 2011; Cheung & Yeung, 2015; Guilmoto & de Loenzien, 2015). One-person households account for approximately 15 per cent or 300 million of the world's two billion households.

The highest proportion of one-person households in Europe is found in Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Norway, exceeding 40 per cent (Cheung & Yeung, 2015). Sweden is another European country with a high proportion of one-person households (38 %), followed by Austria (37%), Switzerland (37%), Netherlands (36%), France (35%)

and Italy (33%) (Cheung & Yeung, 2015). In some European countries, like Germany and Scandinavia this is the most common type of household (Chamie, 2017).

Outside of Europe, moderately high levels of one-person households are observed, such as Japan (32%), the United States (28%), Canada (28%), South Korea (27%), Australia (24%) and New Zealand (24%). Russia has a notably lower proportion of one-person households among developed countries (19%). In general, developing countries have a high proportion of one-person households. India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, the Philippines, and Vietnam have some of the lowest rates of one-person households (less than 10%).

India's traditional joint family system has been disintegrated into smaller nuclear families. Changes in attitude and aspirations promoted alternative living arrangements. A one-person household is a newly emerging family formation in India. According to the 2011 census, one-person households accounted for 3.7 per cent of all households (Dommaraju, 2015). In India, more women lived alone due to widowhood. However, men tend to live alone after controlling their marital status (Dommaraju, 2019). People in the north and north-east are more likely to live in one-person households than people in the rest of the country. Scheduled Tribe (ST) people are least likely to live in a one-person household (Purkayastha et al., 2022). The wealth index is negatively related to the risk of the one-person household (Singh et al., 2022).

A significant demographic feature in modern societies is one-person households (Bennett & Dixon, 2006; Klinenberg, 2012; Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008; Kobrin, 1976). In the West, one-person households are becoming more common, and it looks like they are also rising in other parts of the world (Cheung & Yeung, 2021). The number of older people living alone is on the rise globally (Zeng & Wang, 2018).

Factors Influencing One-person Households
Several factors contribute to the rise in one-person households (Cámara et al., 2021). The literature identified three major factors associated with the rise of one-person households, which are discussed below:

Demographic Factors
Demographic change is a significant factor in increasing one-person households in Western countries. Previous research has linked demographic changes, such as a decrease in marriage rates and an increase in divorce rates, to changes in household structures (Demey et al., 2013; Ogden & Hall, 2004; H. Park & Raymo, 2013; Yeung & Cheung, 2015a). Women who have lost their husbands, as well as many young and middle-aged adults who have never been married, nowadays live alone (Yeung & Cheung, 2015a). With the declining marriage rate, more adults choose to live alone for an extended period (Klinenberg, 2012; Stone et al., 2011; Cheung & Yeung, 2015; Vitali, 2010). Those who are divorced or widowed and do not return to their parental homes are more likely to live alone. Studies show that a sizable proportion of one-person households are made up of widowed or divorced older adults (Bengtson & Putney, 2000; Chevan & Korson, 1972; Golini & Silverstrini, 2013; Yeung & Cheung, 2015a). Furthermore, the number of single young adults living alone in cities has increased (Jamieson & Simpson, 2013; Ogden & Schnoebelen, 2005; Yeung & Cheung, 2015b). People prefer living independently because of a shift in culture toward individualism, and these choices are now much more accepted than before (Keilman, 1988; Vitali, 2010). The increasing rates of divorce and separation have led to a shift in family composition, resulting in an increase in individuals opting to live alone (Demey et al., 2013; Dommaraju, 2015; H. Park & Raymo, 2013).

Socio-economic Factors
Apart from demographic factors, socio-economic factors directly cause the rise of one-person households (Mutchler et al., 2017). According to Klinenberg (2012), socio-economic factors provide the fundamental structural and cultural conditions for living alone. People benefit from sharing labour and may not be able to live independently in an agricultural economy where the family is still primarily a production and welfare unit. As an economy grows, more wage workers and a greater division of labour translate into a greater need, and perhaps a desire, for people to live alone (Cheung & Yeung, 2015). Affluent people can afford to live alone, and many choose individual freedom and privacy (Jamieson & Simpson, 2013; Keilman, 1988; Stone et al., 2011; Vitali, 2010). More elderly people are living independently, not because they have fewer children on whom to rely, but because they do not want to rely on their children (Bongaarts & Zimmer, 2002; Gratton & Gutmann, 2010; Cheung & Yeung, 2015; McGarry & Schoeni, 2000). Moreover, women are becoming more self-reliant and apt to establish one-person households. In developed countries where the government provides social security, widows and widowers often choose to live alone at older ages (Jamieson & Simpson, 2013).

Migration Factors
Due to urbanisation, people are moving away from their native places, and searching for employment often results in a one-person household (Podhisita & Xenos, 2015; Goldstein et al., 1997; Stone et al., 2011; Young & Grundy, 2009). Migration for work means that children are leaving and will continue to leave homes they shared with their parents. The continued out-migration of young people from rural areas increased the number of elderly one-person households in rural areas, significantly increasing the number of rural older people living alone (Cheung & Yeung, 2015; Cheng et al., 2015; Hall et al., 1997; Park, 1994). Because there is not enough space to live in cities and the high cost of living, children often have to leave their parents behind in their home village (Yi, 2016).

Research Gap
While existing literature recognises the growing prevalence of one-person households around the world, there is a significant gap in understanding the nuanced dynamics within the Indian context. Moreover, as this type of household was not common in India in the past, it is getting relatively little attention. The need for this study arises from several unexplored aspects: Prior research often provides a broad overview, lacking in-depth analyses of regional variation within India. The rural-urban dynamics that influence the formation and sustenance of one-person households in India are largely unknown. While some studies hint at correlations between one-person households and socio-economic factors, a comprehensive examination is lacking. The influence of demographic factors such as gender, age and marital status on one-person households is an underexplored aspect. In essence, the research gap lies in the lack of a comprehensive and regional-specific understanding of the dynamics shaping one-person households in India. It is a particularly interesting phenomenon in societies where the family has traditionally played an important role in determining living arrangements. This study seeks to address these gaps and contribute to both academic scholarship and the formulation of informed policies that cater to the unique socio-cultural fabric of the country.

Objectives
1. To investigate the temporal and geographical trends in the prevalence of one-person households in India.
2. To investigate the association between one-person households and socio-economic and demographic factors.

Data Sources and Methodology
The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is the primary data source for this study, which spans the years 1992 to 2021. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) provides a rich dataset encompassing a wide range of socio-economic variables, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of one-person households in India. The first National Family Health Survey was conducted in 1992-93, with 88,562 households participating. The NFHS-2 was administered from 1998 to 1999 and included 92,486 households as a representative sample (IIPS & ORC Macro, 2000). The NFHS-3 was conducted from 2005 to 06, covering a representative sample of 1,09,041 households. The NFHS-4 was conducted in 2015-16 and it includes a sample size of 6,01,509 households (IIPS & ICF, 2017). The NFHS-5 (2019-21) gathered information from 6,36,699 households (IIPS & ICF, 2021).

The NFHS employs a multi-stage sampling design, ensuring a representation at the national and state levels. Primary sampling units are selected systematically, following that, households within each unit and individuals within each household were chosen at random.

Variables
The research looks at the prevalence of one-person households in India. Individuals residing alone are the primary variable of the study.

Dependent variable- As the focus is on one-person households, the household is classified as one-person and multiple-person households. One-person households are households occupied by only one member who lives alone (Southerton & Fowler, 2014). On the other hand, multiple households represent a household with two or more persons. So, the dependent variable for the analysis is a one-person household.

Independent variable- To understand the dynamics of one-person households, the study focuses on key variables such as place of residence, gender, age, marital status, education, wealth index, religion, and caste.

Analytical strategy
The first analyses use descriptive statistics such as cross tabulation to provide a snapshot of the prevalence and characteristics of one-person households. To investigate the relationship between one-person households and independent variables, binary logistic regression analysis is used. All the analysis was done on SPSS-25. The results are presented in tables and figures to facilitate interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The NFHS surveys adhere to ethical guidelines, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of survey participants. Informed consent protocol was followed, and ethical approval was obtained from the IIPS institutional review boards.

3. RESULTS DISCUSSION

Changing Patterns of One-person Households in India

Table 1 shows data on the changing patterns of one-person households in Indian states and union territories between 1992-1993, 1998-1999, 2005-06, 2015-16, and 2019-21. Over time, the percentage of one-person households has steadily increased across the country. The percentage has grown from 2.6 per cent in 1992-93 to 4.6 per cent in 2019-21. This suggests a broader societal shift towards more individuals opting to live independently.

Different states and Union Territories exhibit varying patterns. For example, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (combined), Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have relatively higher percentages of one-person households compared to other states and Union Territories. Sikkim consistently shows higher percentages reaching 11.5 per cent in 2019-21. On the other hand, it is comparatively low in Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab. Moreover, it is zero per cent in Ladakh. The diversity in patterns indicates that regional factors such as cultural norms, economic development, and urbanisation play a crucial role in shaping living arrangements.

Table 1: Percentage of One-person Households in States and Union Territories of India

States	1992-93	1998-99	2005-06	2015-16	2019-21
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	N.A	N.A	N.A	5.5	6.6
Andhra Pradesh	2.1	3.1	6.2	5.2	7.2
Arunachal Pradesh	4.3	5.5	8.4	7.7	5.1
Assam	3.0	1.5	3.8	3.4	3.4
Bihar	2.1	2.2	4.6	2.7	3.8
Chandigarh	N.A	N.A	N.A	5.8	3.7
Chhattisgarh	N.A	N.A	5.0	4.0	4.7
Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	N.A	N.A	N.A	6.5	8.3
Goa	4.1	4.2	5.3	6.1	4.2
Gujarat	4.0	3.4	4.1	3.9	4.9
Haryana	1.1	2.1	2.8	2.3	2.7
Himachal Pradesh	3.9	5.7	6.3	5.4	8.6
Jammu & Kashmir	1.3	1.7	1.7	1.5	0.5
Jharkhand	N.A	N.A	2.9	3.4	3.6
Karnataka	2.6	2.4	4.9	4.6	4.7
Kerala	2.0	2.2	3.0	2.9	6.2
Ladakh	N.A	N.A	N.A	0.0	0.0
Lakshadweep	N.A	N.A	NA	3.3	6.1
Madhya Pradesh	2.6	3.0	4.8	3.7	3.6
Maharashtra	2.5	2.4	4.2	4.6	5.1
Manipur	1.5	2.0	2.9	2.9	3.9
Meghalaya	1.1	3.4	6.2	3.2	2.1
Mizoram	1.4	2.4	5.4	5.2	6.9
Nagaland	0.0	6.7	9.1	7.5	7.9
NCT of Delhi	5.8	1.6	7.3	5.3	3.5
Odisha	3.2	4.0	4.4	3.5	4.9

Puducherry	N.A	N.A	N.A	3.4	6.3
Punjab	1.8	2.3	3.2	2.4	2.8
Rajasthan	2.1	2.2	4.7	3.3	2.3
Sikkim	NA	2.2	5.7	4.2	11.5
Tamil Nadu	3.8	5.7	10.3	4.8	10.1
Telangana	N.A	N.A	N.A	4.8	7.0
Tripura	2.7	2.2	3.8	4.5	5.6
Uttar Pradesh	2.3	2.2	3.7	3.7	2.7
Uttarakhand	N.A	N.A	5.7	6.3	4.9
West Bengal	2.7	2.9	4.2	3.2	3.9
INDIA	2.6	2.9	4.8	3.9	4.6

Source: National Family Health Surveys, 1992-2021   N.A=(Data) Not Available

The data reflects temporal changes, with certain regions experiencing significant increases over time. Over the years, the prevalence of one-person households has increased significantly in states such as Sikkim, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram, and Andhra Pradesh. Sikkim, for example, saw an increase from 2.2 per cent in 1998-99 to 9.4 per cent in 2019-21. This suggests evolving lifestyle choices and preferences. On the other hand, the percentage of one-person households has decreased in some states, including the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi, Chandigarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Chhatisgarh. For example, the NCT of Delhi fell from 5.8 per cent in 1992-93 to 3.5 per cent in 2019-21, indicating a different demographic trend in these areas.

Each state's trajectory is different, with some showing consistent increases, fluctuations, or stabilisation in the percentage of one-person households. Kerala and Mizoram, for example, show significant fluctuation, indicating the influence of local dynamics.

One-person Households at the Regional level
Map 1 illustrates the prevalence of one-person households across different regions of India.

Northern Region (3.9 %)
The northern region has a lower occurrence of one-person households. This could be due to strong family ties and cultural practices that place a premium on extended family living arrangements.

Western Region (4.3%)
The western region shows a moderate prevalence of one-person households. This could be indicative of a transitional phase, with factors like urbanisation and changing socio-economic dynamics influencing household structures.

Eastern Region (4.0%)
The eastern region mirrors the western region with a comparable prevalence of one-person households. This could imply shared socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to the observed household dynamics.

North-eastern Region (3.9%)
The north-eastern region, with its diverse tribal cultures and geographical isolation, maintains a low prevalence. Cultural and tribal influences prevalent in this region may contribute to these patterns.

Southern Region (7.9%)
The southern region experiences a higher prevalence of one-person households due to urbanisation, higher education, and a progressive societal outlook encouraging independent living.

Central Region (4%)
The central region, including states like Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh, has a moderate prevalence of one-person households. This suggests a balanced influence of traditional values and emerging urban trends on household structures.

The map 1 depicts regional differences in the prevalence of one-person households. Because of the higher prevalence in the southern region, targeted support systems and infrastructure catering to individuals living alone

may be required. The regional disparities in the prevalence of one-households reflect the complex interplay of cultural, economic, and cultural factors shaping household dynamics in different parts of India.

Map 1: Percentage of One-Person Households in Regions of India
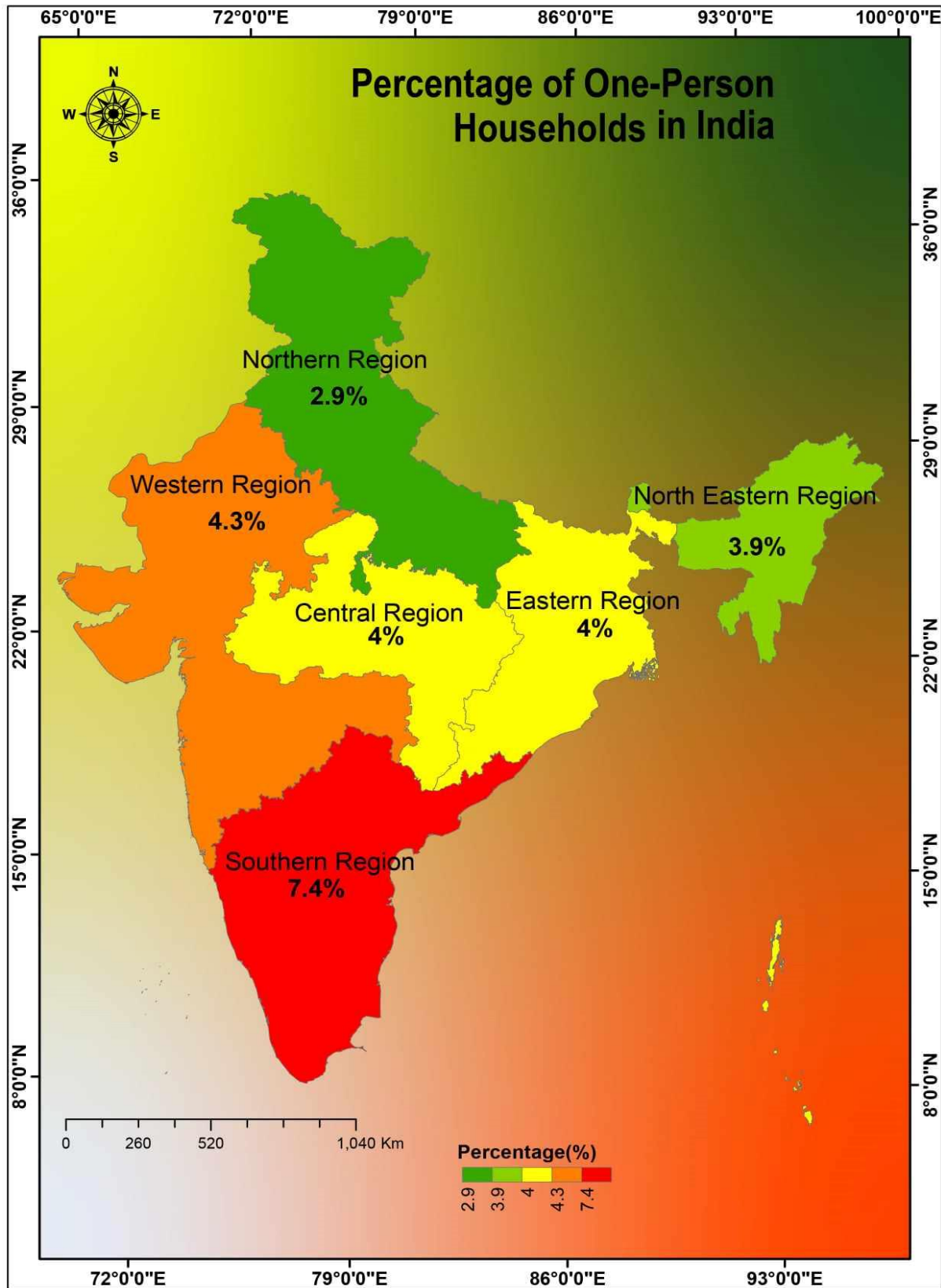
Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Rural-urban Differentials in One-person Households
Figure 1 depicts data on one-person households classified by place of residence, distinguishing between rural and urban areas across India's states and union territories.

In general, urban areas have a higher prevalence of one-person households than rural areas. This is evident in majority of the states, where the urban percentage is frequently higher than the rural percentage. Sikkim has the highest proportion of one-person households in urban areas, followed by Himachal Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (combined), Tamil Nadu, and Nagaland. The higher prevalence in urban areas corresponds to broader urbanisation trends. Urban environments typically offer a diverse range of career opportunities, educational institutions, and social experiences, attracting individuals who may choose to live independently.

While urban areas generally show higher percentages, rural areas still contribute significantly to the prevalence of one-person households in several states like Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Telangana, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Nagaland. Factors such as agricultural opportunities, rural employment schemes, or lifestyle choices that do not necessarily bind individuals to traditional family structures may influence the presence of one-person households in rural areas.

Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu (combined), and Assam have the widest rural-urban divides. Andaman & Nicobar Islands have the smallest rural-urban divide, followed by Goa, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. The percentage of one-person households in West Bengal and Gujarat is the same. In Ladakh, there are no one-person households.

The data reflects the intricate interplay of rural and urban dynamics in shaping the prevalence of one-person households across India's states and union territories. The observed variations emphasise the importance of a nuanced, region-specific approach to understanding and addressing changing patterns of living arrangements.

Figure 1: Percentage of One-person Households by Place of Residence in States and Union Territories of India
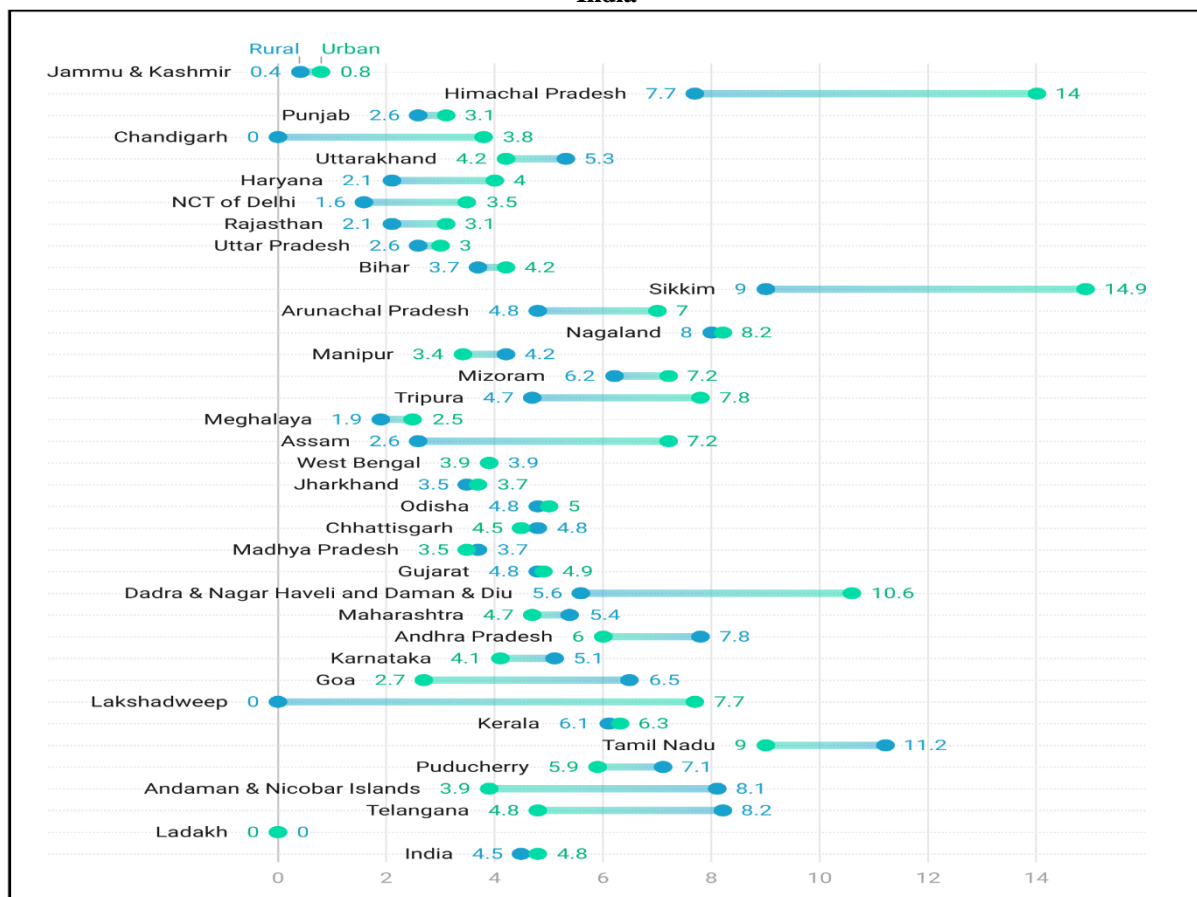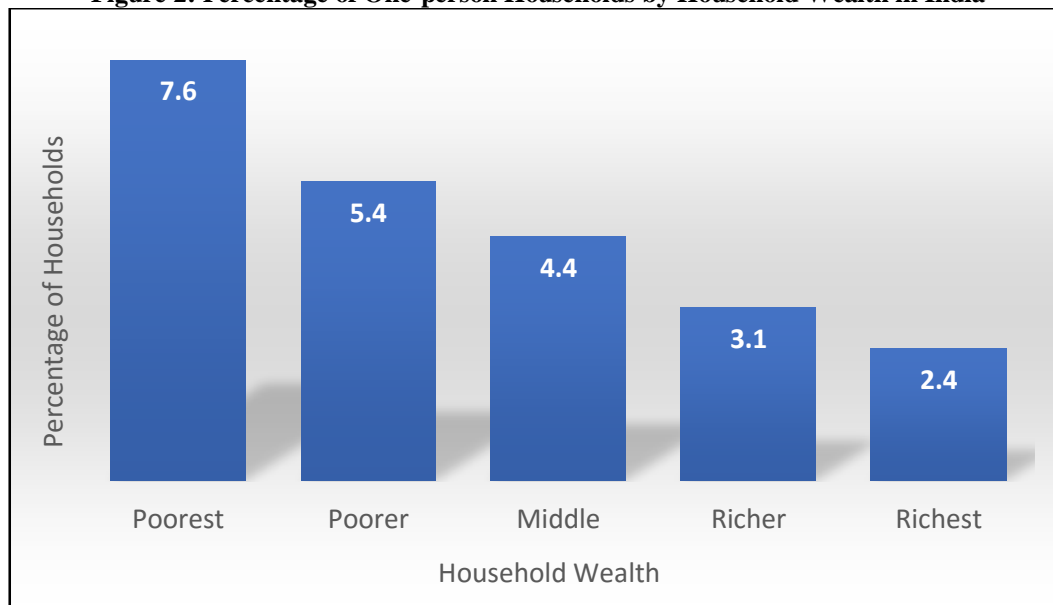

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Household Wealth and One-person Households
Figure 2 provides data on the prevalence of one-person households based on different categories of household wealth. According to the data, there is a negative relationship between household wealth and the prevalence of one-person households. The percentage of one-person households decreases as household wealth increases. From the poorest to the richest wealth categories, the prevalence of one-person households is decreasing. The trend indicates that individuals from poor households are more likely to live.

The highest prevalence of one-person households is observed in the poorest wealth category, with 7.6 per cent. This may be attributed to various socio-economic factors, including limited resources and potentially higher rates of migration for employment or educational opportunities. As wealth increases, the percentage of one-person households decreases, indicating that living alone becomes less common in households with higher economic well-being. The decline is gradual, from 5.4 per cent in the "poorer" category to 2.4 in the "richest" category.

Individuals in richer households may have greater financial stability, making it more feasible to maintain larger households. Economic factors such as housing costs and the availability of affordable shared living arrangements could contribute to this trend. Cultural norms and family values might influence living arrangements. In some Indian cultures, there is a preference for extended family living together, especially in wealthier households where support networks can be more robust.

Figure 2: Percentage of One-person Households by Household Wealth in India

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Figure 3 shows the percentage of one-person households classified by their wealth status, comparing the "poorest" and "richest" categories across different states and union territories. There is a significant difference in the prevalence of one-person households between the "poorest" and "richest" wealth categories across Indian states and union territories. This emphasises the significance of taking regional and economic disparities into account.

Kerala has the highest proportion of poor one-person households (33.2%), followed by Tamil Nadu, Goa, Puducherry, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh. This could be influenced by factors such as migration, economic opportunities, or lifestyle choices. While Lakshadweep has the highest among the richest (8.3%), Sikkim, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu (combined), Assam, and Himachal Pradesh are next. The relatively high percentages in the richest category defy the general trend.

There is an inverse relationship between wealth and the prevalence of one-person households in all states and union territories. Generally, as households move from the "poorest" to the "richest" category, the percentage of one-person households tends to decrease. Ladakh has no one-person households, both in rural and urban areas. Some states like Meghalaya, Andaman & Nicobar Island have zero percentage in urban areas. Lakshadweep also has zero percentage in rural areas.

Kerala has the widest household wealth disparity, followed by Tamil Nadu, Goa, Puducherry, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Punjab. This suggests the influence of economic factors on living arrangements. On the other hand, the gap is lowest in Lakshadweep, Assam, Ladakh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Jammu & Kashmir.

States with higher urbanisation rates such as Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, show relatively higher percentages of one-person households. Urbanisation and economic opportunities in cities may contribute to individuals choosing to live independently.

Figure 3: Percentage of One-person Household by "Poorest" and "Richest" Household Wealth in States and Union Territories of India
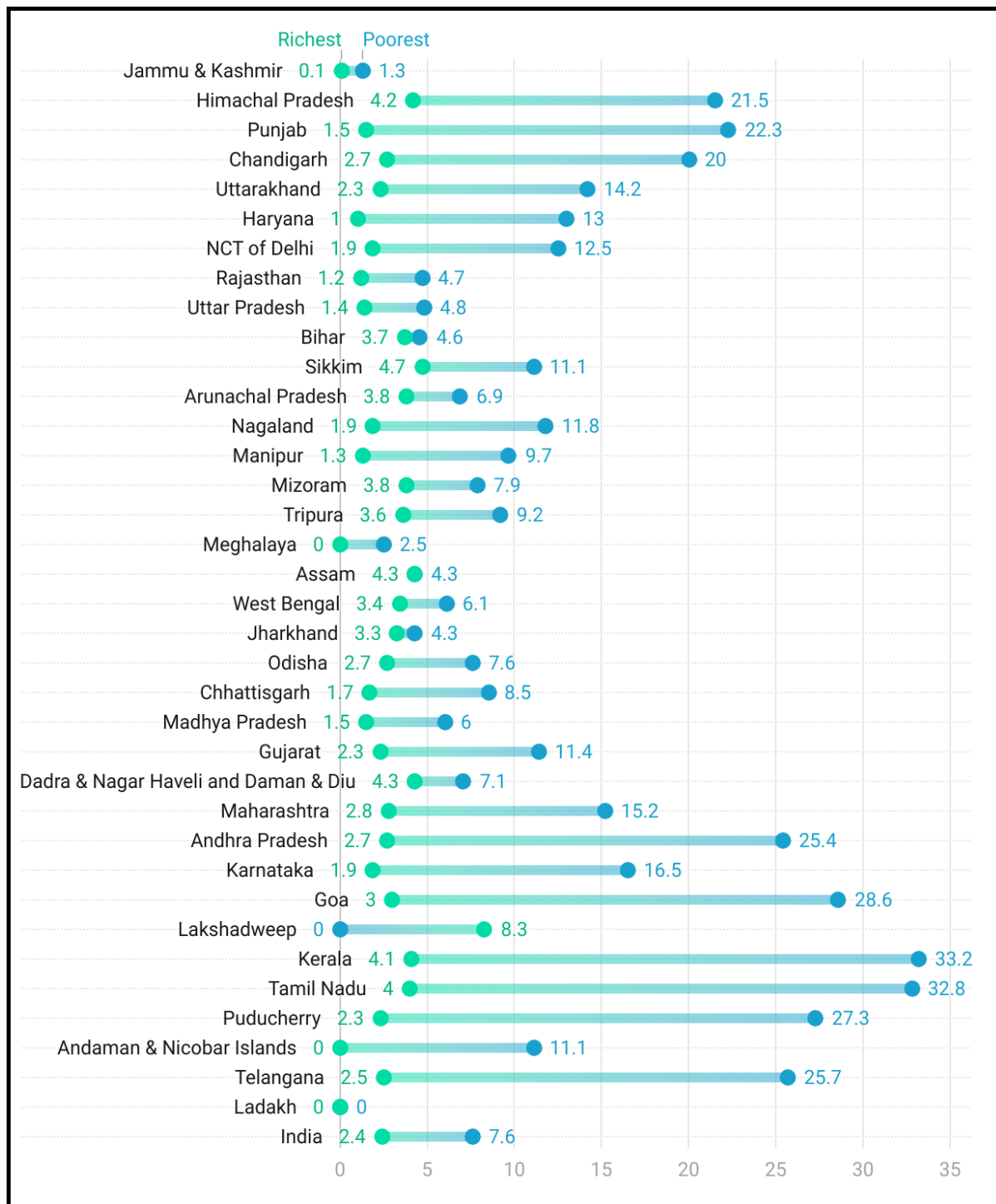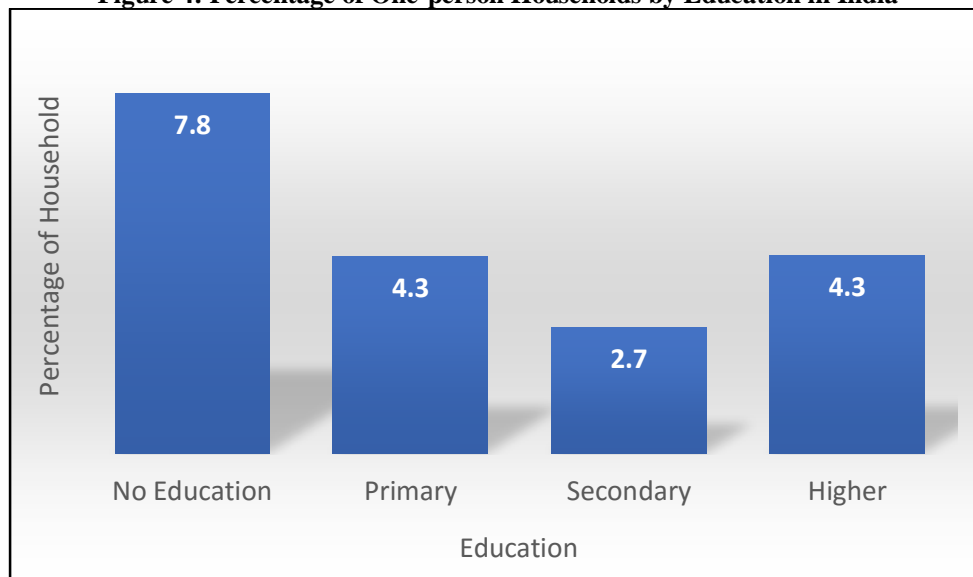

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Education and One-Person Households
Figure 4 provides data on the prevalence of one-person households categorised by the level of education. The values represent the percentage of households with only one person within each education category. According to the data, there is an inverse relationship between education level and the prevalence of one-person households. As one's level of education rises, so does the proportion of one-person households.

Individuals with "no education" account for 7.8 per cent of one-person households. This might be attributed to factors such as limited exposure to urban lifestyles, economic constraints, or cultural practices. The prevalence decreases among those with "primary" education (4.3%). This could indicate that individuals with basic education may be more likely to engage in family or communal living arrangements. Individuals with "secondary" education have a lower prevalence of one-person households (2.7%). Secondary education may contribute to a better understanding of social dynamics and an increased likelihood of shared living. The percentage rises slightly among those with higher education (4.3%). This could be due to factors such as career mobility, the pursuit of independent living, or lifestyle choices among individuals with advanced education.

Higher education often correlates with increased economic opportunities and employment prospects. As individuals become more economically stable, they may be more likely to afford shared living arrangements or home ownership. Cultural expectations and societal norms may play a role. In some Indian cultures, there is a tendency for individuals with higher education to delay marriage or to pursue career opportunities, leading to a higher likelihood of living alone.

Figure 4: Percentage of One-person Households by Education in India

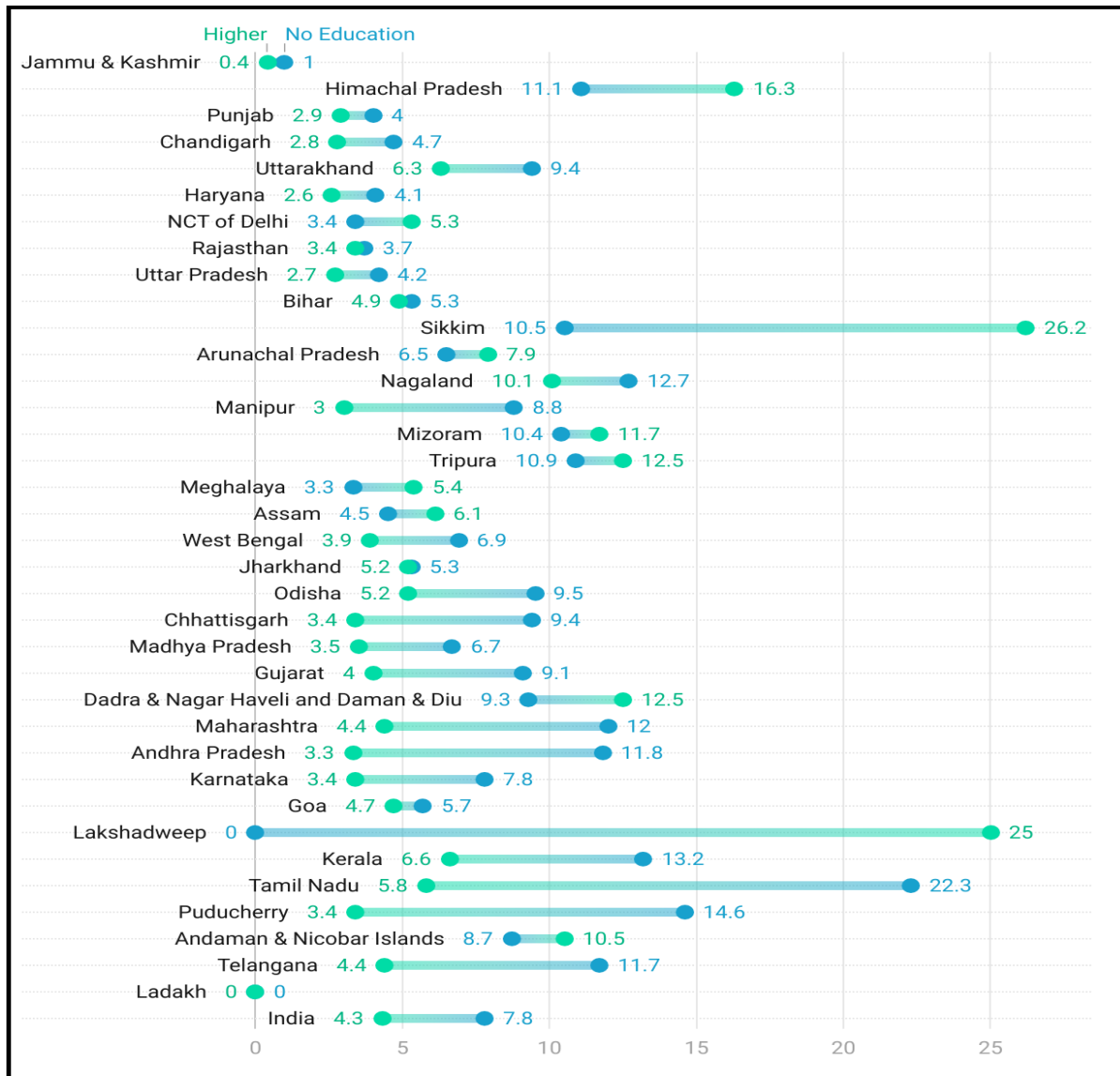**Source:** National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Figure 5 shows the percentage of one-person households classified by the level of education attained, comparing individuals with no education to those with higher education across India's states and union territories.

Individuals with "no education" have a higher prevalence of one-person households in many states. This could be due to factors such as a lack of exposure to urban lifestyles, a lack of economic mobility, or cultural practices that encourage communal living. Tamil Nadu stands out with a substantial difference between individuals with "no education" (22.3 %), followed by Puducherry, Kerala, Nagaland, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, Sikkim, and Mizoram. This suggests a significant impact of education on living arrangements in these states.

States with higher percentages of one-person households among those with higher education indicate a trend of individuals with advanced education levels choosing to live independently. Sikkim exhibits a complete reversal of the trend, with 26.2 per cent in "higher" education, followed by Lakshadweep, Himachal Pradesh, Tripura, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (combined), Mizoram, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Nagaland. This may be influenced by factors such as career opportunities, lifestyle choices and cultural shifts. Understanding the unique socio-cultural context of these states and union territories is crucial to interpreting these trends.

The gap between "no education" and "higher education" is highest in Tamil Nadu, followed by Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Kerala, Chhatisgarh, Manipur and Gujarat. Lakshadweep, on the other hand, has the lowest, followed by Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu (combined), Meghalaya, the NCT of Delhi, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Assam, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram.

Figure 5: Percentage of One-person Households by "No Education" and "Higher Education" in States and Union Territories of India
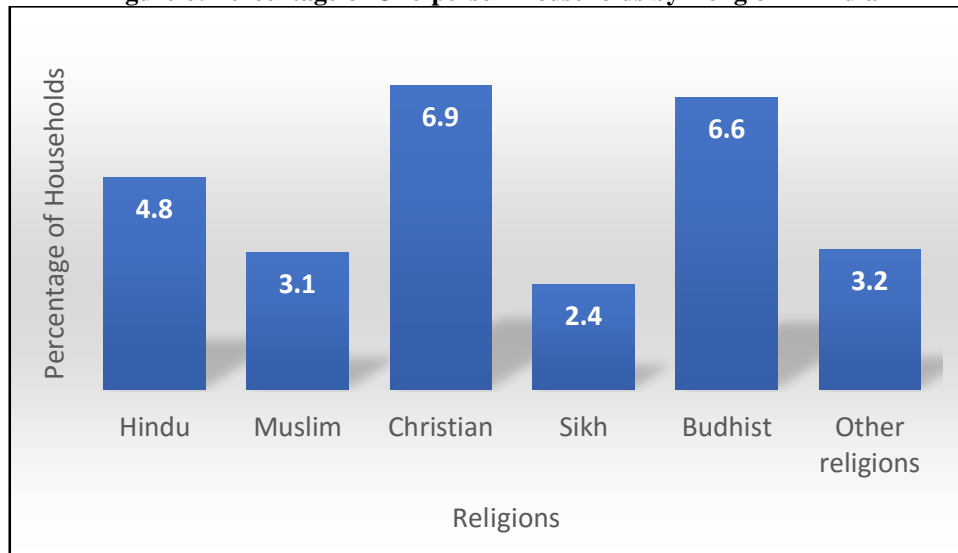

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Religion and One-person Households

Figure 6 depicts the percentage of one-person households in the dataset classified by religion. The data indicates that the prevalence of one-person households varies among different religious groups. The Christian and Buddhist communities have higher percentages of one-person households compared to the national average. This might suggest that individuals from these religious groups are more likely to live alone, possibly influenced by cultural or lifestyle factors. The Hindu and Muslim communities have slightly lower percentages of one-person households compared to the national average. This may reflect different cultural or familial norms that influence living arrangements. Sikhs have a relatively lower percentage of one-person households, suggesting a cultural or religious context that emphasises communal or family living. The category "other religions" which includes Jain, Parsi, Jewish etc. falls in between the national average and the higher percentages seen in Christian and Buddhist communities.

Living arrangements can be influenced by cultural practices and religious beliefs. Religious practices, rituals and social norms can shape living arrangements. Religions that place a strong emphasis on family bonds and interdependence, for example, may have lower rates of one-person households. Cultural practices and values may also influence the prevalence of one-person households. Some cultures and traditions may emphasise communal living and close family ties, while others may be more individualistic.

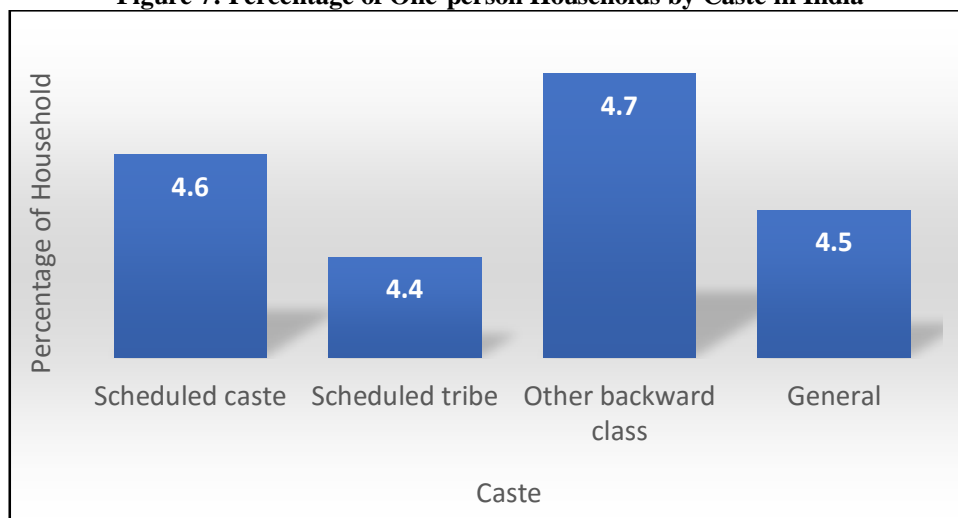**Figure 6: Percentage of One-person Households by Religion in India**

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Caste and One-person Households

Figure 7 depicts the percentage of one-person households in the dataset classified by caste. According to the data, there are minor differences in the prevalence of one-person households among different caste groups. All major caste categories, such as Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Classes (OBC), and General, have percentages that range from 4.4 to 4.7 per cent. The data implies that, on average, individuals from various caste backgrounds are equally likely to live alone. In terms of the prevalence of one-person households, there is no significant variation among the major caste categories.

The marginal differences could indicate that, on average, people from different castes face similar socio-economic conditions or have comparable access to educational and employment opportunities, which influences their living arrangements. The relatively consistent percentages may also reflect shared values or family structures that transcend caste lines, influencing living patterns across diverse communities.

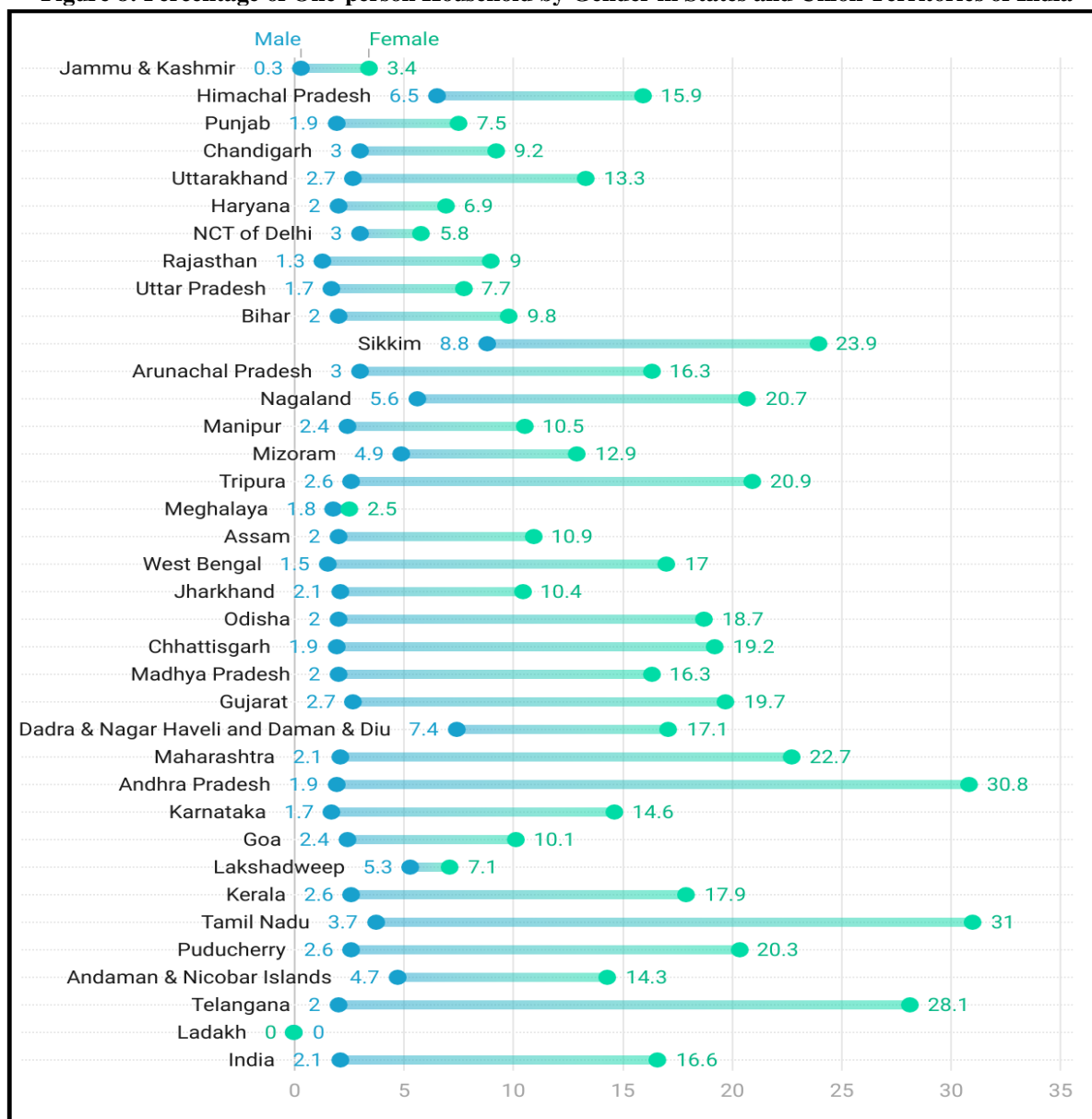**Figure 7: Percentage of One-person Households by Caste in India**

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Gender and One-person Household

Figure 8 depicts the prevalence of one-person households in India by gender (male and female) across states and union territories. The data show a significant variation in the percentage of one-person households across states and union territories. This diversity suggests that cultural, economic and social factors influence living arrangements, and these factors vary widely from one state to another.

Female-headed one-person households are highest in the state of Tamil Nadu (31%) followed by Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Tripura, Nagaland and Puducherry. This could be indicative of specific socio-economic or cultural factors influencing living arrangements among women in these states. Potential urbanisation and lifestyle factors can also influence the choice of women in these states. Sikkim, on the other hand, has the highest proportion of male-occupied one-person households, followed by Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (combined), Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Lakshadweep. Understanding the socio-economic and cultural context of these states and union territories could provide insights into the factors influencing male living arrangements. Andhra Pradesh has the largest gender disparity in one-person households, followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Maharashtra. It is lowest in Meghalaya, followed by Lakshadweep, NCT of Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana.

Figure 8: Percentage of One-person Household by Gender in States and Union Territories of India
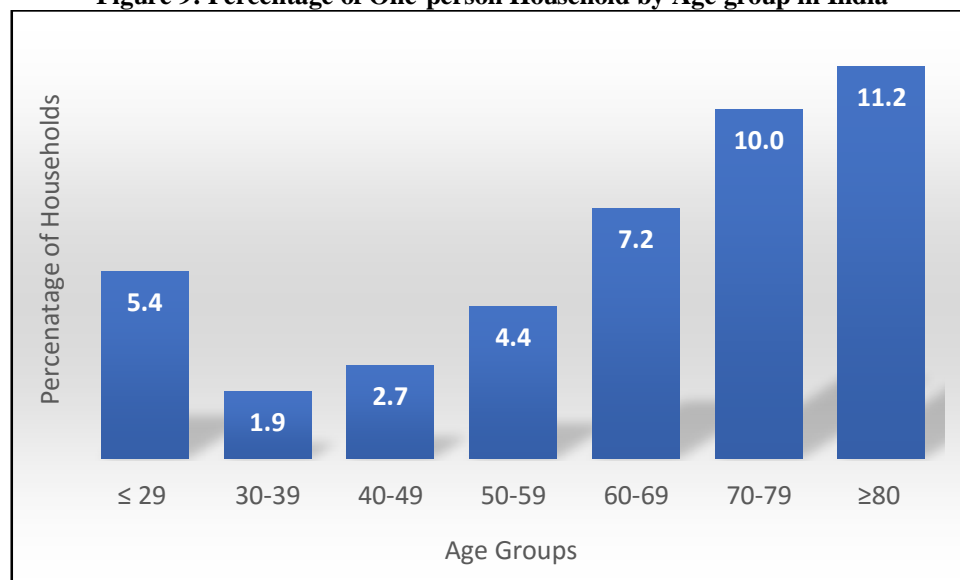

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Age and One-person Households
Figure 9 depicts the prevalence of one-person households broken down by age group. According to the data, the prevalence of one-person households is increasing as people get older.

Individuals aged 29 or below have a relatively higher percentage of one-person households at 5.4 per cent. This could be attributed to factors such as pursuing education, starting careers or choosing independent living arrangements at a younger age. The percentage decreases to 1.9 per cent for individuals in the age group of 30-39. This might indicate that, on average, people in their 30s are more likely to live with family members or partners. There is a slight increase to 2.7 per cent in the age group of 40-49, suggesting a potential re-evaluation of living arrangements as individuals progress through different life stages. The prevalence of one-person households further increases to 4.4 per cent in the age group 50-59. This could be associated with factors such as empty nesting, retirement, or lifestyle choices. Individuals aged 60-69 exhibit a higher prevalence at 7.2 per cent. This could be influenced by factors like retirement, changes in health, or the desire for independent living. The percentage increases significantly to 10 per cent for individuals aged 70-79. This age group may include a higher proportion of individuals living alone due to factors like widowhood, health considerations, or personal preferences. The highest prevalence is observed in the 80-plus age groups, with 11.2 per cent of individuals living alone. This aligns with the common trend of increased likelihood of living alone in older age, potentially due to factors like the loss of a spouse or the need for independent living arrangements.

The data reflects potential points in individuals' lives, where living arrangements may change based on life events, career changes, family structure, and health considerations.

**Figure 9: Percentage of One-person Household by Age group in India**

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Marital Status and One-Person Households
Figure 10 depicts the prevalence of one-person households classified by marital status. Individuals who have never married make up the second-highest percentage of one-person households, accounting for 28.3 per cent. The high proportion of one-person households among never-married people could be attributed to lifestyle choices, career pursuits, or the trend of postponing marriage. The percentage of one-person households among married people is strikingly low, at 1.3 per cent. The low percentage of married individuals reinforces the societal norm that married couples typically live together. The low prevalence suggests that the majority of married couples choose to share a household. Widowed individuals represent a significant proportion of one-person households, accounting for 20.4 per cent. This high proportion of widowed people among one-person households is to be expected, given that the loss of a spouse frequently leads to people living alone. Divorced individuals also have a substantial presence among one-person households, comprising 27.7 per cent. The substantial percentage of divorced individuals highlights the impact of marital dissolution on living arrangements. Divorce often leads to individuals establishing independent households. The category "not living together" has the highest percentage at 31.6 per cent. This category may include individuals in various relationship statuses, such as those in long-distance relationships, separated couples or individuals in non-cohabiting partnerships.

Figure 10: Percentage of One-person Households by Marital Status in India
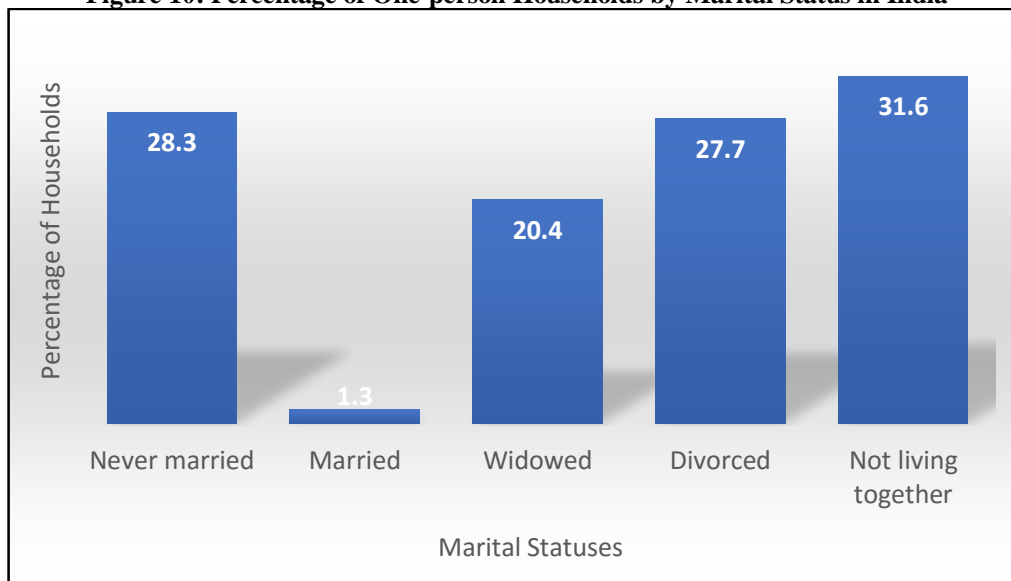
Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21

Drivers of One-person Households: A Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

The negative coefficient for "rural" (β=-0.061) indicates that individuals living in rural areas have lower log odds of living in a one-person household than those living in urban areas. The p-value (sig.=0.000) indicates that the coefficient for 'rural' is statistically significant. The odds ratio (OR) for rural is 0.941. The odds ratio (rural) has a 95% confidence interval of 0.918-0.964. Since this interval does not include 1, it reinforces the statistical significance of the "rural" co-efficient. The findings suggest that, after controlling for other factors, individuals living in rural areas have a lower likelihood of living in one-person households than those living in urban areas. This implies that place of residence is a significant predictor of living arrangements.

All coefficients for wealth categories (poorer, middle, richer, richest) are statistically significant, as indicated by very low p-values (sig.=0.000). The 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios do not include 1, indicating that the odds differences are statistically significant. The findings indicate that, after controlling for other variables, there is a significant relationship between household wealth and the likelihood of living in a one-person household.

All the coefficients for education categories (primary, secondary, higher) are statistically significant, as indicated by very low p-values (sig.=0.000). The 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios do not include 1, indicating that the odds differences are statistically significant. The findings indicate that, after controlling for other variables, there is a significant relationship between education level and the likelihood of living in a one-person household. Individuals with higher educational levels are less likely to live alone than those with no education, and this pattern holds across all education levels.

The coefficients for Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and other religions are statistically significant, as indicated by a very low p-value (sig.<0.05). The Muslim coefficient is not statistically significantly significant (sig.=0.627). The 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios do not include 1, indicating that the differences in odds for Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and others are statistically significant. However, it is not significant for Muslims. The findings indicate that, after controlling for other variables, there is a significant relationship between certain religious affiliations and the likelihood of living in a one-person household. The likelihood of living alone varies significantly across religious groups.

All the coefficients for Scheduled Tribe, Other backward Classes and General are statistically significant (sig.<0.05). The 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios do not include 1, indicating that the differences in odds for scheduled tribes, other backward classes, and general are statistically significant. The findings indicate that, after controlling for other variables, there is a significant relationship between caste and the likelihood of living in a one-person household. The likelihood of living alone varies significantly across caste groups.

The female coefficient is statistically significant (sig.0.05), indicating that gender (being female) is related to the likelihood of living in a one-person household. Females are approximately 22.6 times more likely than males to

live in a one-person household. The 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios for females do not include 1, indicating that the difference in odds is statistically significant. The findings indicate a significant relationship between gender and the likelihood of living in a one-person household. Females are more likely than males to live alone.

Except for individuals over the age of 80, all age group coefficients are statistically significant (sig.0.05). Individuals aged 30-39 are approximately 2.635 times more likely than those aged 29 to live in a one-person household. With each age group up to 70-79 years, the chances of living in a one-person household increase significantly. For age groups 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and 70-79, the 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios do not include 1, indicating that the differences in odds are statistically significant. The 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios include 1 for age group 80, indicating that the odds differences are not statistically significant. The findings show a significant relationship between age groups and the likelihood of living in a one-person household. The likelihood of living alone rises with age up to 70-79 years, after which the effect becomes insignificant.

Marital status significantly influences the likelihood of living in a one-person household, with married individuals having a higher chance than never married. However, the significance of this relationship is minor, as the odds ratios' 95% confidence intervals provide a range of plausible values.

Table 2: Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of One-person Households in India

Variables	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Place of Residence					
Urban ®		0.000			
Rural	-0.061	0.000	0.941	0.918	0.964
Household Wealth					
Poorest ®		0.000			
Poorer	-1.210	0.000	0.298	0.286	0.311
Middle	-0.846	0.000	0.429	0.411	0.448
Richer	-0.630	0.000	0.533	0.509	0.557
Richest	-0.274	0.000	0.760	0.725	0.798
Education					
No Education ®		0.000			
Primary	-2.675	0.000	0.069	0.025	0.189
Secondary	-2.033	0.000	0.131	0.048	0.360
Higher	-1.573	0.002	0.207	0.076	0.570
Religion					
Hindu ®		0.000			
Muslim	0.047	0.627	1.048	0.868	1.265
Christian	0.502	0.000	1.652	1.363	2.003
Sikh	-0.333	0.001	0.717	0.588	0.872
Buddhists	0.783	0.000	2.188	1.740	2.752
Other religions	-0.291	0.010	0.748	0.599	0.933
Caste					
Scheduled Caste ®		0.000			
Scheduled Tribe	0.527	0.000	1.694	1.528	1.878
Other Backward Classes	0.568	0.000	1.765	1.585	1.964
General	0.496	0.000	1.641	1.483	1.817
Gender					

Male ®		0.000			
Female	3.118	0.000	22.600	7.538	67.759
Age groups					
≤29 ®		0.000			
30-39	0.969	0.001	2.635	1.456	4.767
40-49	2.031	0.000	7.618	4.211	13.783
50-59	1.695	0.000	5.448	3.013	9.849
60-69	1.184	0.000	3.268	1.808	5.908
70-79	0.658	0.029	1.932	1.069	3.492
≥80	0.294	0.331	1.342	0.742	2.425
Marital Status					
Never-Married ®		0.000			
Married	-3.928	0.061	0.020	0.000	1.205
Widowed	-0.535	0.799	0.586	0.010	35.881
Divorce	-3.492	0.096	0.030	0.000	1.864
Not living together	-3.898	0.063	0.020	0.000	1.244

Source: National Family Health Survey, 2019-21
®=Reference Category

Summary
The comprehensive analysis spans demographic, socio-economic and cultural dimensions, providing valuable insights into the evolving landscape of household structures in the country.

The study tracks the changing patterns of one-person households over multiple time intervals (1992-93, 1998-99, 2005-06,2015-16 and 2019-21), revealing notable shifts in this household composition across states and union territories. Significant differences in the prevalence of one-person households are observed across states and union territories, indicating the impact of regional factors on household structures. States like Tamil Nadu and Sikkim stand out with distinct patterns compared to others. Regional variations in one-person households highlight the diverse socio-cultural fabric of India.

The research underscores the urban-rural divide in the prevalence of one-person households. Urban areas consistently exhibit higher levels, reflecting the impact of urbanisation, changing lifestyles, and economic factors on household composition. The persistent urban-rural divide in one-person households signifies the complex interplay between urbanisation, economic opportunities, and social dynamics. Policymakers should think about tailoring urban development strategies to address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the growing prevalence of one-person households in urban areas.

The study examines the association between one-person households and socio-economic variables such as wealth, education, and marital status. The findings shed light on how factors like household wealth and education levels influence the likelihood of living in a one-person household. Age and gender emerge as important determinants, with the elderly and women more likely to live in one-person households. Marital status plays a significant role, as individuals who are never married exhibit higher odds of living in one-person households compared to their married counterparts.

4. CONCLUSION

The research article makes a significant contribution to the understanding of one-person households in India by providing a comprehensive look at the factors that shape this household structure. The findings not only highlight the current state but also trace the evolutionary trajectory, providing a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, and social scientists. The regional disparities underscore the need for targeted interventions that consider the unique socio-cultural contexts of different states. Urbanisation trends and socio-economic factors should be closely monitored, recognising their impact on household structure. The emphasis on age and gender dynamics calls for tailored policies addressing the specific needs of elderly individuals and women living in one-person households. Understanding the educational and wealth-related dimensions provides actionable insights for designing interventions aimed at reducing disparities.

In conclusion, the research enhances the knowledge of the dynamics of one-person households in India, laying the groundwork for informed decision-making in the realms of social welfare, urban planning, and community development. Further studies building upon these findings can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of evolving household structures in the dynamic socio-cultural landscape of India.

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