

Uttarakhand Tourism

Notable Facts with Special Focus on Homestays

September 2024

Prepared by

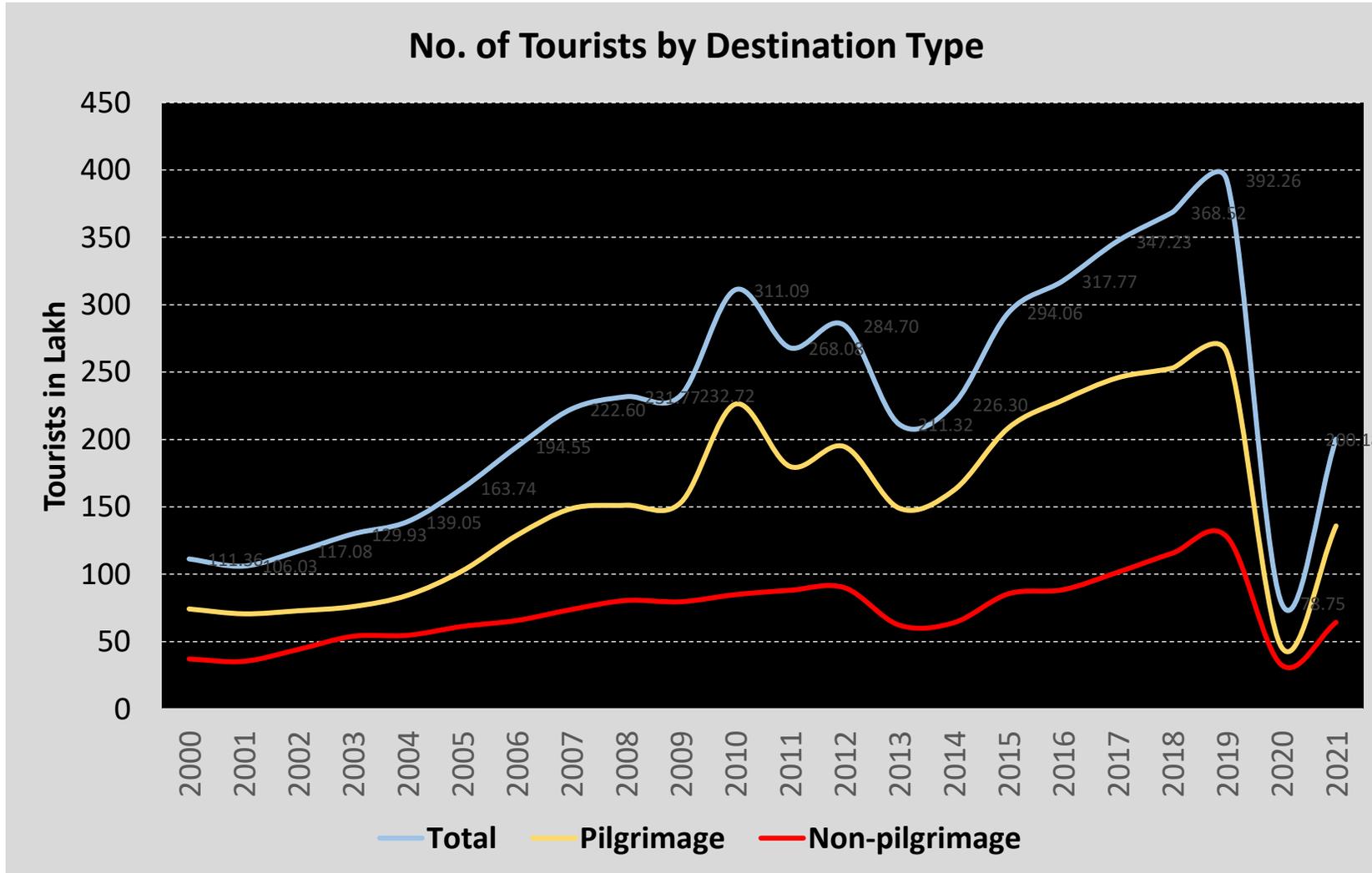
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Why This Small Study?

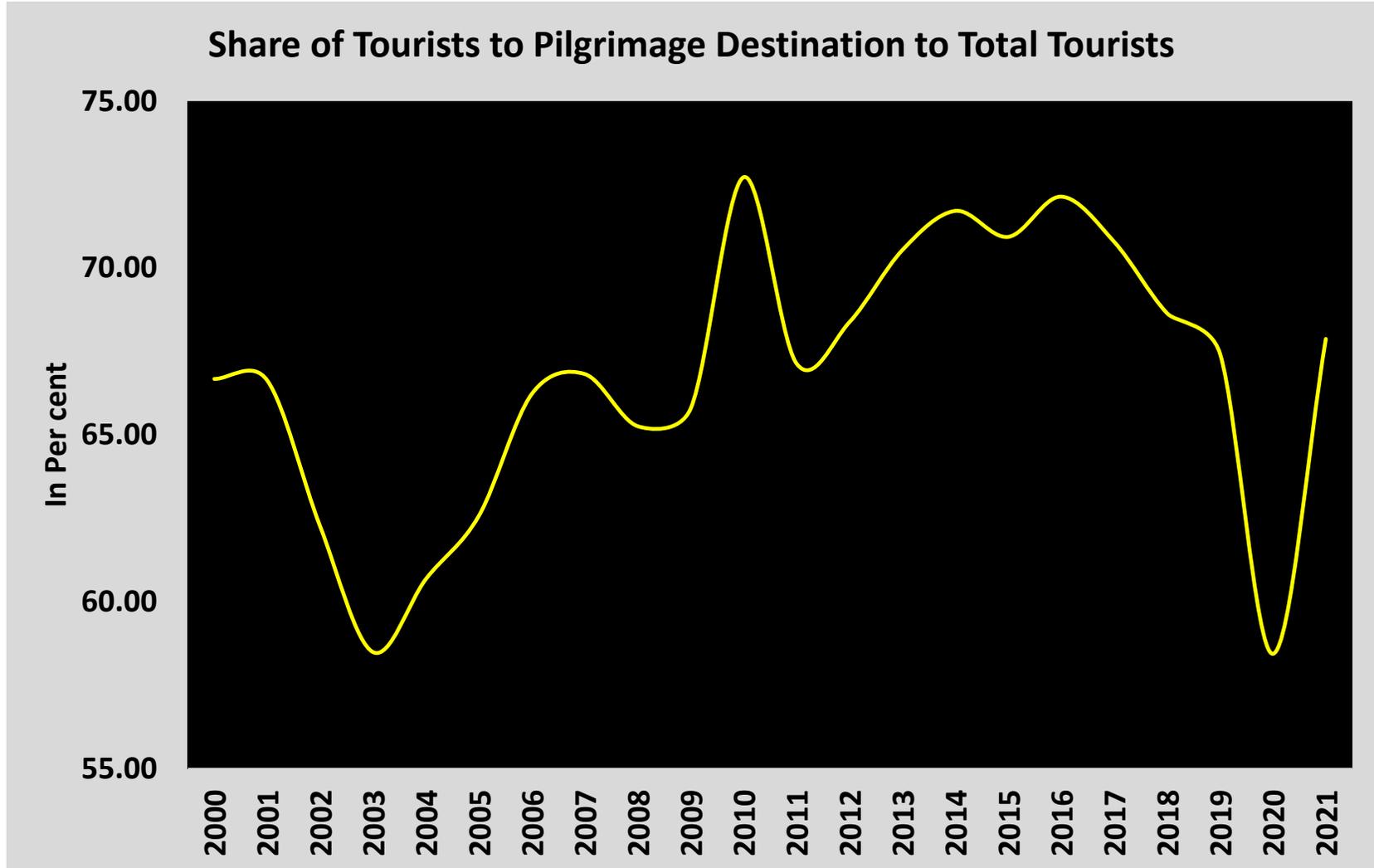
- **Uttarakhand economy is dependent to a large extent on tourism activities. The total share of tourism in the State Gross Value Added is estimated at 6.59 per cent and the total share in the number of jobs in the State is estimated at 26.87 per cent.®**
- **Acknowledging the fact that over tourism have multiple adverse impacts and can destroy the tourism activities in long run, this study is a check on whether tourism activities in the state is following sustainable pattern so that tourism can grow and benefit every stakeholder in an optimum manner.**
- **Is the state well equipped with its inadequate infrastructure base, especially due to unfriendly terrain? Surge in tourism impacts available infrastructure. As a consequence, local population along with the tourists suffer significantly and ultimately it leads to a chaotic situation.**
- **As tourism activities demand accommodation facilities, it is not possible to cater that demand beyond a limit by formal accommodation sector maintaining sustainability, both physical and cultural. What role homestays can play to mitigate this challenge.**

Trend shows that tourists travelling to destinations known for pilgrimage is more than twice than those travelling to non-pilgrimage destinations in Uttarakhand



- Number of tourists visiting to various destinations in the state have gone up significantly between 2000 to 2019.
- From 111 lakh in 2000 it reached to 392 in 2019. As obvious, a sharp decline in 2020 was followed by a partial recovery to 200 lakh in 2021 was noticed.
- Tourists to pilgrimage destinations increased from 74 lakhs in 2000 to 265 lakhs in 2019 and 136 lakh in 2021.
- Tourists to non-pilgrimage destinations went up from 37 lakhs to 127 lakh in 2019 and 67 lakh in 2021.
- Interestingly, number of pilgrimage destinations are 8 and non-pilgrimage destinations are 20.

The share of tourists travelling to pilgrimage destinations shows more or less a rising trend till 2016, and dropped thereafter till 2010



- An interesting trend was observed in over the period 2000 to 2021.
- With a share of 67% in 2000, it was reduced to 58% in 2003. afterwards it surged to a level of 73% by 2010 and continued close to that level except 2012 and 2013.
- Again it dropped to 67% during 2019 and 2021, ignoring the drop in 2020 for the pandemic
- This periodic declines are quite a puzzle, especially due to fact that even after 2013 cloud burst near Kedarnath shrine, the share shows a marginal but rising trend, barring 2008 ad 2009 for recession
- Is it due to flash floods and massive landslides ever year during the Monsoon, especially after 2016?

Tourists visits are highly concentrated to a few destinations that are commonly known as pilgrimage destinations

Destination	Share in 2000	Rank 2000	Share in 2019	Rank 2019
Haridwar	47.82	1	55.50	1
Massoorie	7.64	2	7.71	2
Dehradun	4.13	4	7.41	3
Tehri	3.56	6	5.99	4
Badrinath	6.24	3	3.17	5
Kedarnath	2.69	8	2.55	6
Nainital	2.32	11	2.38	7
Rishikesh	2.13	13	2.20	8
Gangotri	1.87	14	1.35	9
Joshimath (Govindghat, Ghanghariya)	3.66	5	1.25	10
Yamunotri	0.80	18	1.19	11
Kotdwar (Swaragasram, Chilla)	0.89	17	1.15	12
Uttarkashi (Harshil, Gangnani etc.)	2.38	10	0.97	13
Rudraprayag (without Kedarnath)	2.18	12	0.85	14
Auli	0.08	27	0.73	15
Corbett National Park	0.55	24	0.72	16
Gopeshwar (Nandprayag, Mundoli, Tharali etc.)	2.51	9	0.65	17
Hemkunth Sahib	2.94	7	0.61	18
Champawat	0.30	26	0.54	19
Pithoragarh	0.58	21	0.53	20
Srinagar	0.98	16	0.50	21
Udham Singh Nagar	0.55	23	0.42	22
Kathgodam	0.37	25	0.39	23
Ranikhet	0.57	22	0.39	24
Almora	0.62	19	0.33	25
Kausani & Bageshwar	0.61	20	0.27	26
Pauri	1.03	15	0.20	27
Velly of Flower	0.01	28	0.04	28

- Interestingly top 5 locations, as per 2019 share, account for 80% of the total tourists in Uttarakhand
- Haridwar itself accounts for more than 55% of the total tourists visited to Uttarakhand in 2019, which was about 43% in 2000.
- Apart from Massoorie, Tehri and Nainital, all other destinations among top 10 ranking in 2019 are pilgrimage locations.
- Among the pilgrimage sites, Gopeshwar and Hemkunth Sahib lost their importance over time
- Among the places known for their natural beauty, among non-pilgrimage destinations, Auli has been prominent, which went up from 27th ranked in 2000 to 15th in 2019
- However, share in total tourists for most of the destinations known for their natural beauties are low and less than 0.5%.

Five destinations account for about 85% of total increase in tourists during 2000 to 2019

Destination	Increase during 2000-2019	Growth in %	% Share in Total Increase
Haridwar	1,64,45,593	308.9	58.55
Dehradun	24,45,591	532.0	8.71
Masoorie	21,73,093	255.4	7.74
Tehri	19,52,105	493.0	6.95
Nainital	6,75,370	261.2	2.40
Corbett National Park	2,21,780	360.6	0.79
Rishikesh	6,26,615	264.1	2.23
Kedarnath	7,00,021	233.3	2.49
Srinagar	87,679	80.6	0.31
Badrinath	5,49,661	79.1	1.96
Udham Singh Nagar	1,01,381	164.2	0.36
Joshimath (Govindghat, Ghanghariya)	82,149	20.2	0.29
Auli	2,76,168	3163.4	0.98
Kotdwar (Swaragasram, Chilla)	3,53,149	355.6	1.26
Kathgodam	1,12,057	273.9	0.40
Uttarkashi (Harshil, Gangnani etc.)	1,17,383	44.4	0.42
Ranikhet	89,255	140.9	0.32
Pithoragarh	1,45,218	225.4	0.52
Rudraprayag (without Kedarnath)	92,168	37.9	0.33
Kausani & Bageshwar	37,178	54.5	0.13
Almora	60,052	87.5	0.21
Gangotri	3,21,927	154.5	1.15
Yamunotri	3,76,862	425.0	1.34
Hemkunth Sahib	-87,417	-26.7	-0.31
Champawat	1,76,812	521.6	0.63
Velly of Flower	16,323	1482.6	0.06
Gopeshwar (Nandprayag, Mundoli, Tharali etc.)	-23,807	-8.5	-0.08
Pauri	-34,206	-29.9	-0.12
Total	2,80,90,160	252.3	100.00

- Certain interesting facts emerge with the numbers of absolute increase and growth rate of tourists in various tourist destinations
- As obvious from the previous slide on number of tourists, Haridwar, Dehradun and Masoorie accounts for about 75% of the total increase in tourists to Uttarakhand destinations during 2000 to 2019.
- Only Haridwar accounts for close to 60% of the total tourist increase in the state which amounts to 1.64 crore tourists.
- The absolute tourist increases in Rishikesh, Kedarnath and Badrinath in 2019 compared to 2000 are 6.26, 7.00 and 5.50 lakh respectively.
- The increases in Gangotri and Yamunotri are 3.22 and 3.77 lakh respectively.
- Decrease in tourist visits are found in Hemkunth Sahib, Gopeshwar and Pauri.
- It is to be noted that in most of pilgrimage destinations, increase in tourists are enormous considering the size of these locations.

What do you think are the key challenges that Uttarakhand tourism sector must be facing?

- **The key challenge the state of Uttarakhand must be facing is over tourism. More precisely it is concentration of tourists in a few destinations, especially the ones related to pilgrimage**
- **To accommodate such huge influx of tourists in small locations like Haridwar, Rishikesh, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri etc. has a tremendous adverse impact on the available infrastructure – Road, Accommodation, public transport, waste management and associated problems like pollution, crime and the similar ones.**
- **Importantly, a large part of the pilgrimage tourism occurs during May to August-September, marking the Char Dham Yatra.**
- **Simply, the available infrastructure cannot support such large number of tourists in these places. The number is way beyond the carrying capacities of these locations**

Though business and revenue is growing fast, is this model sustainable in long term?

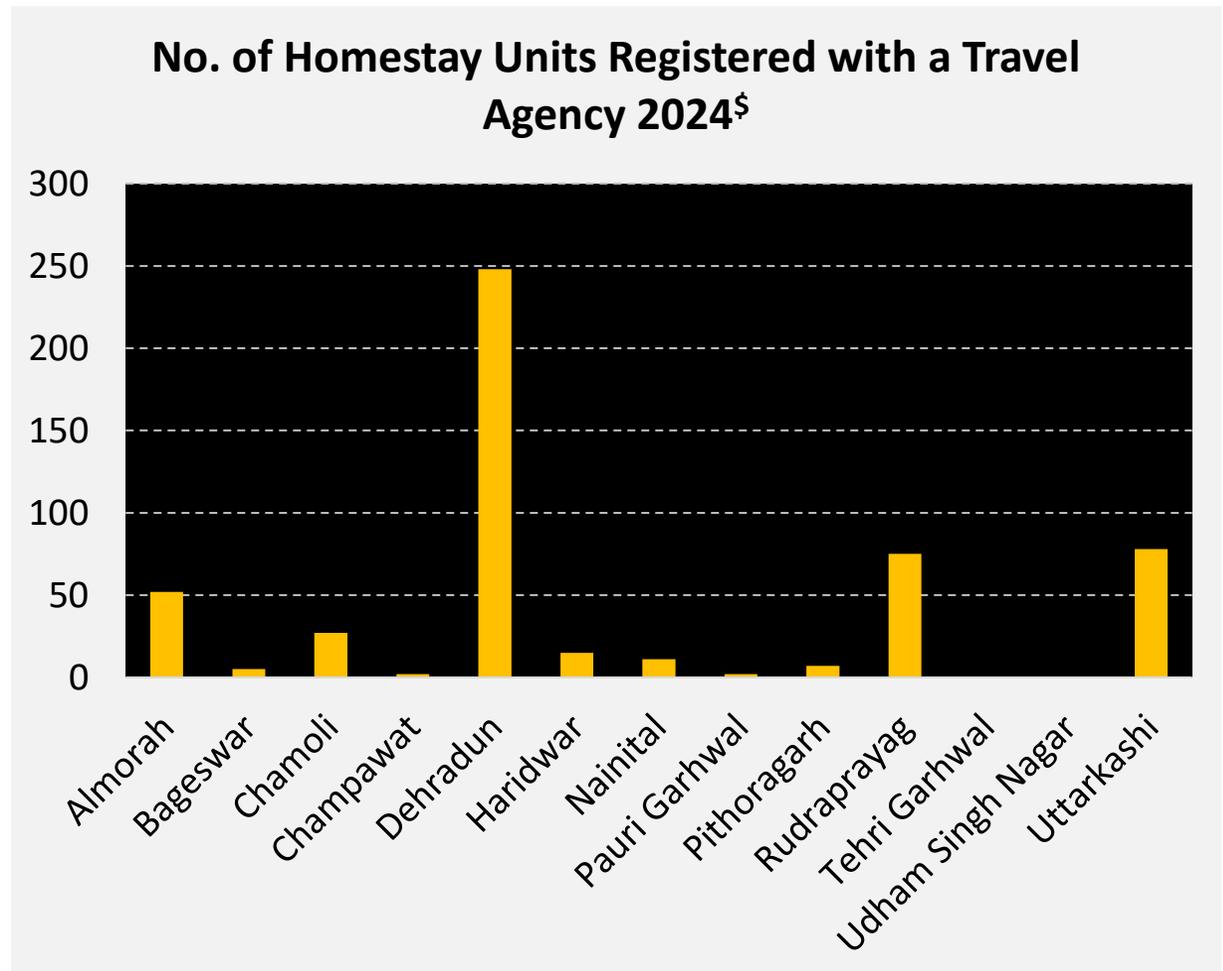
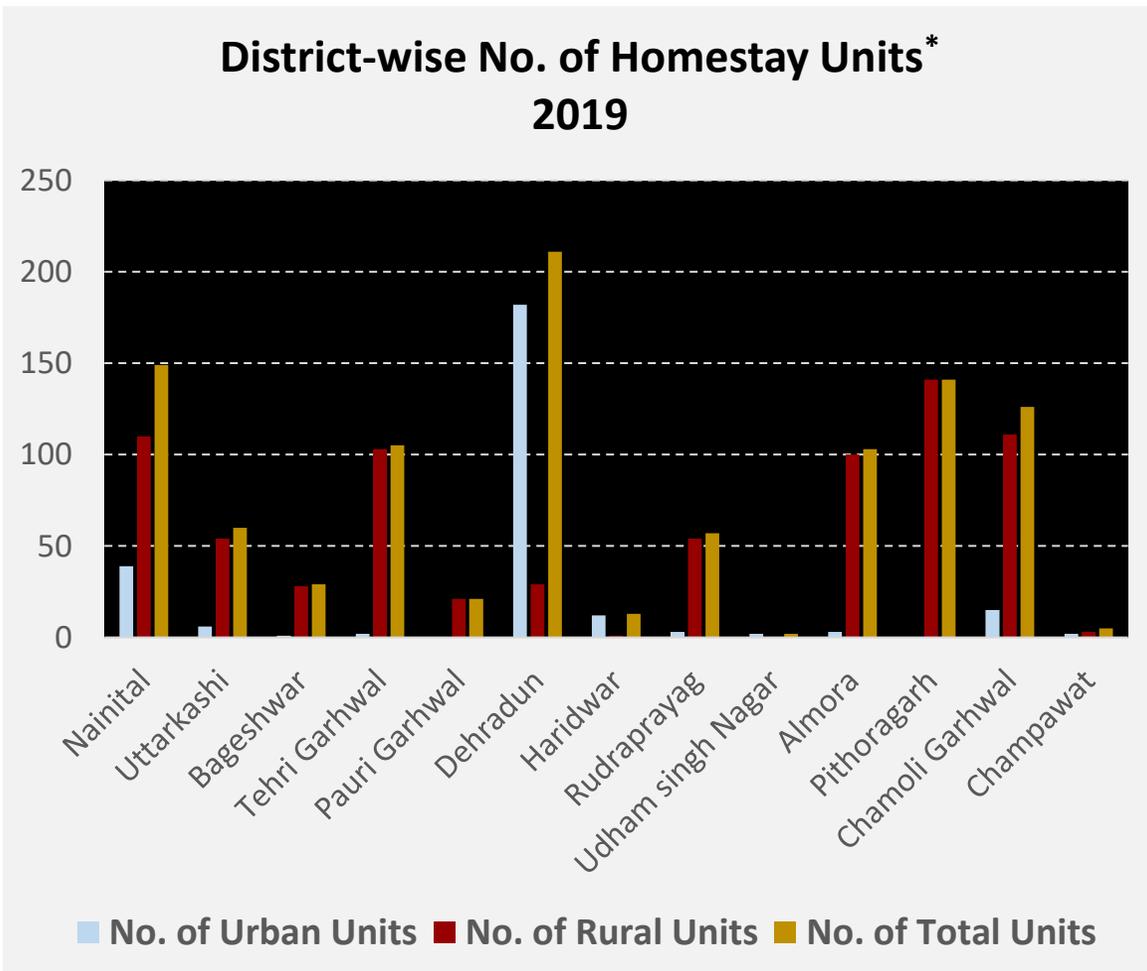
- **The simple answer is NO.**
- **The state is already facing massive landslides, partly due to activities related to widening of roads and new constructions. Trees are felled indiscriminately, dynamites are used for breaking mountain blocks, more and more dams are created – ultimately the ecosystem of the state is being disturbed tremendously.**
- **Hotels have cropped up everywhere, pollution has made people forget that hills are for fresh air, wastes generated by tourists are littered everywhere. In fact, none of these can be avoided in an unplanned tourism development path.**
- **But we cannot forget about sustainability of the sector and also of these locations. It is of utmost requirement that a sustainable tourism development plan is implemented on ground and not in paper only**

Can HOMESTAYS play any role in such an unsustainable tourism scenario?

- **Theoretically the answer is YES, but partially for accommodation sector.**
- **Homestays, by its original definition, can do a lot better to this financially flourished But health-wise unsustainable sector in Uttarakhand.**
- **This is because of two key reasons –**
 - a) **Homestays are supposed to be driven by the local Population. Local people always respect their ecosystem and also wish to restore local culture and heritage. Therefore, their perspective is different from those who run for only profit making**
 - b) **Homestays are more eco-friendly in terms of new construction, electricity usage, waste management and multiple other issues that business is not bothered about much**
- **The state government also has policy mapping for homestay sector, which perhaps requires rigorous evaluation regarding its implementation at grass root level and success**

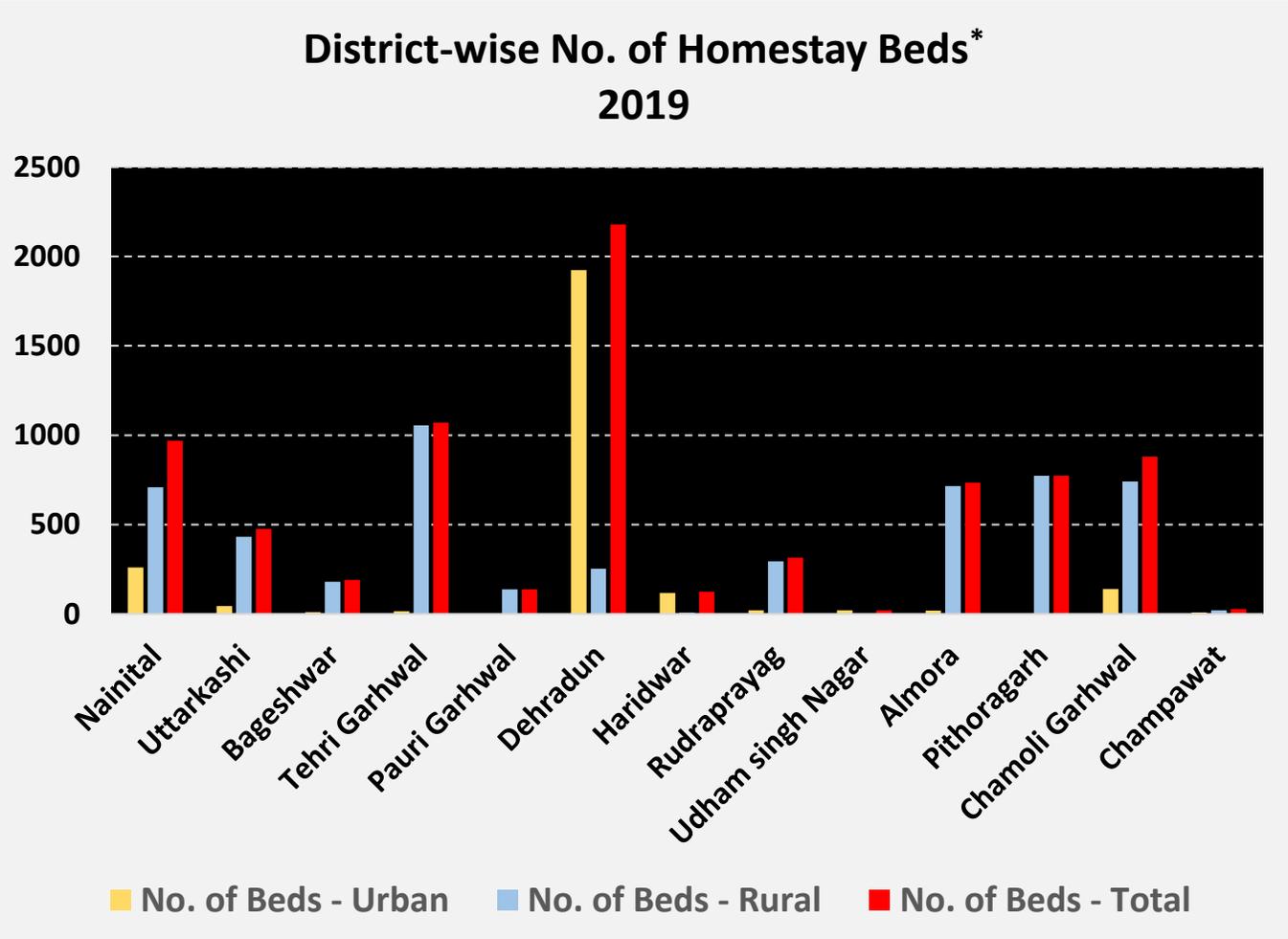
What are the current availability of Homestays in Uttarakhand?

The figures below clearly suggest that through 2019 government record shows homestays in significant numbers in some districts, 2024 data from one OTA does not show the same. The remote areas do not show many homestays as accommodation options.



Note: * Registered with Uttarakhand Government
 \$ Collated from one popular travel websites as on September 2024

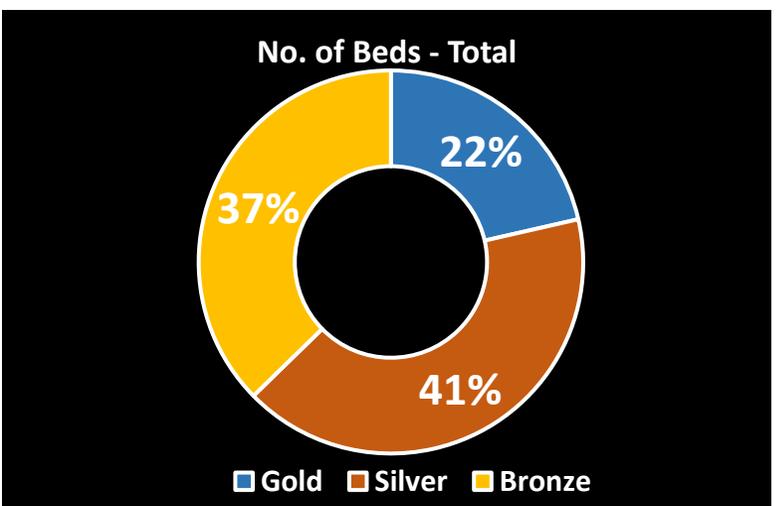
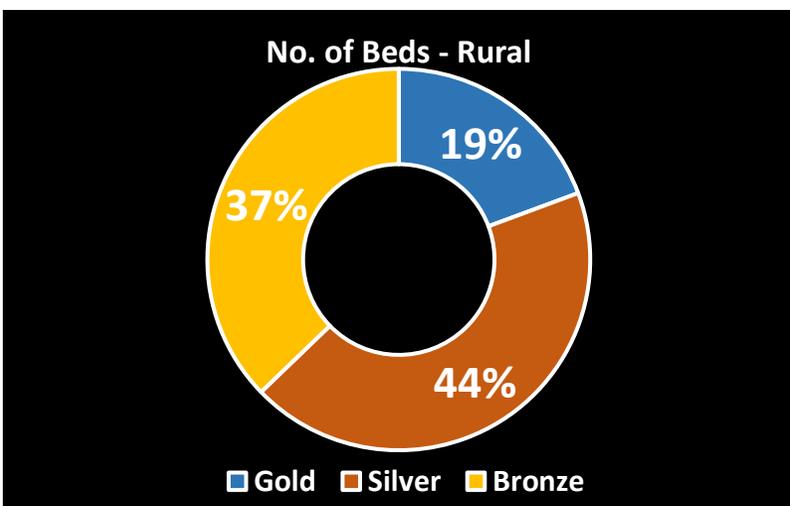
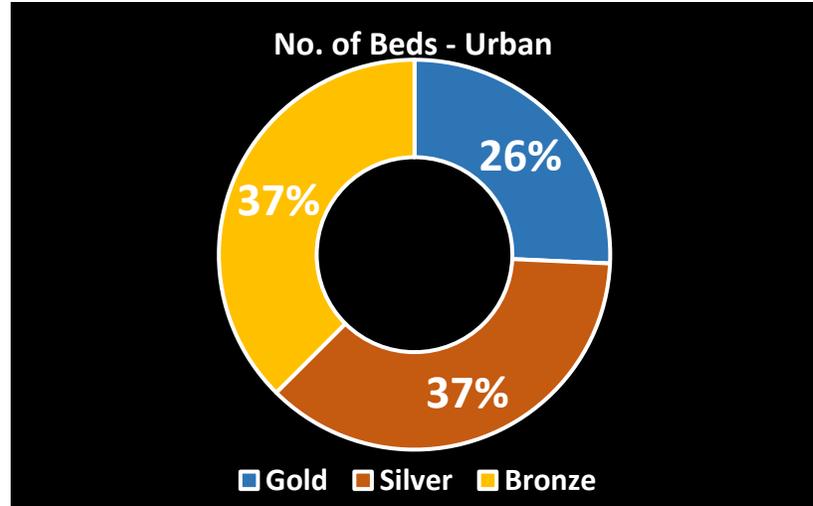
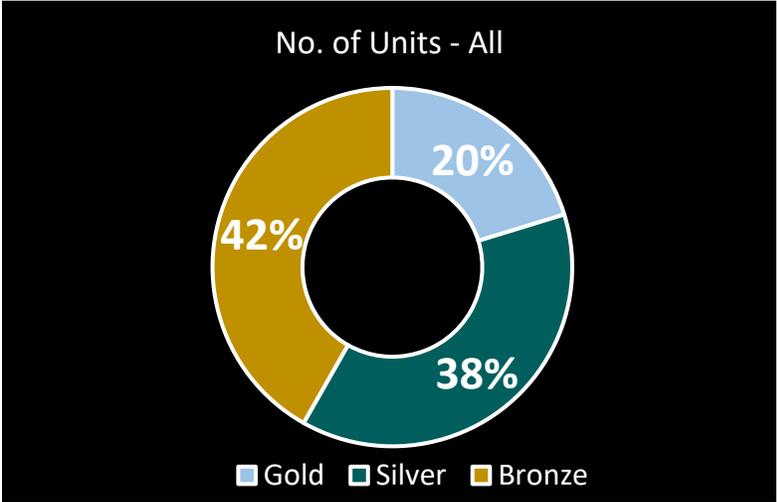
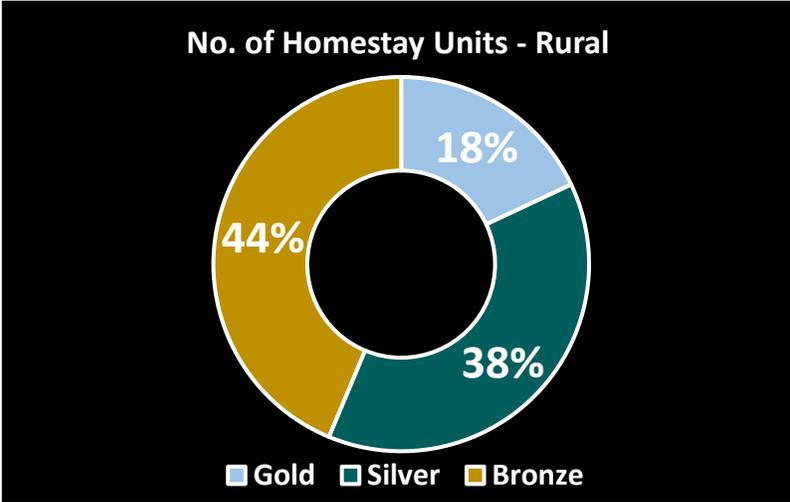
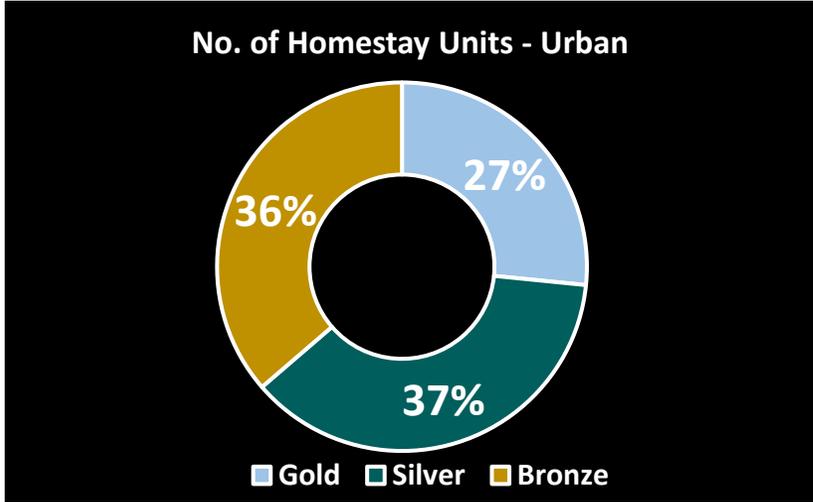
Number of beds available in homestays in different districts does not portray an optimistic picture when the large number of tourists visiting Uttarakhand are considered



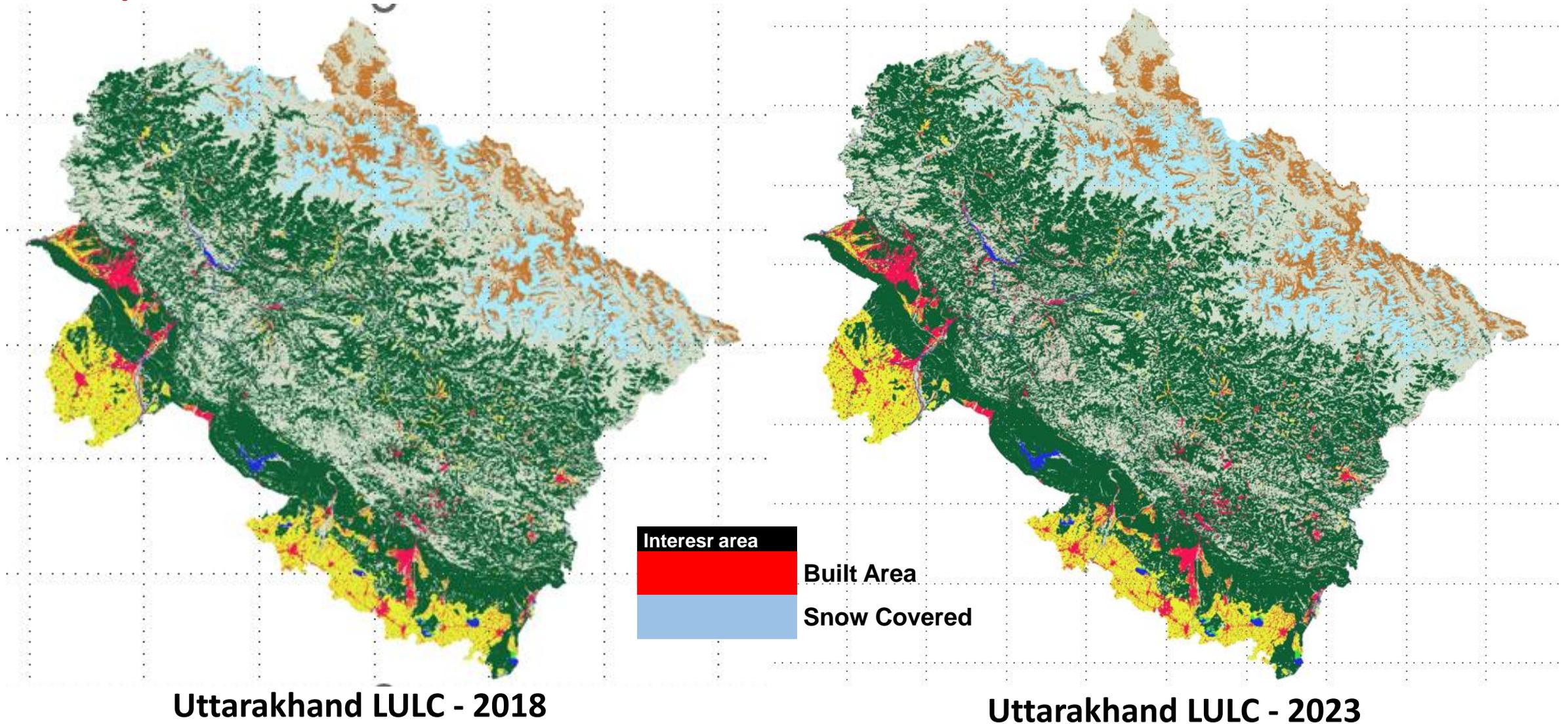
- Except Dehradun, beds available in homestays in the state are minuscule. Even in Dehradun, if the number of tourists are considered, beds available are minuscule.
- Also, if one considers the fact that majority of the homestays are of silver and bronze categories, that talks about the availability even worse in terms of facilities available.
- A study by ACRA in 2019 showed that many of the tourists had poor experience with homestays in terms of the services offered to them.

Note: * Registered with Uttarakhand Government

Majority of the homestay units and the beds available in homestays are in Silver and Bronze categories, depicting lesser facilities available for the tourists



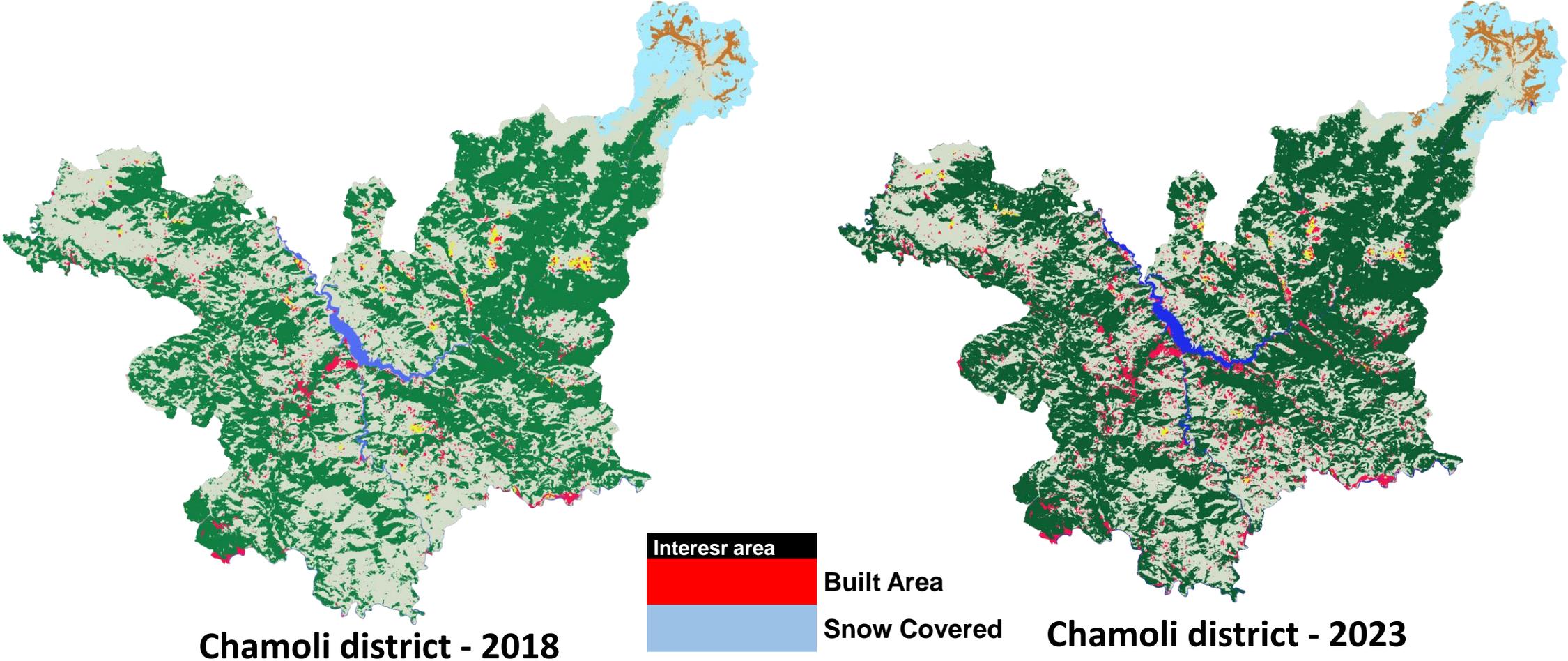
Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) data as extracted from satellite imageries show significant increase in built areas (building constructions) in Uttarakhand during a small span of 2018 to 2023. On the other hand areas under snow cover has declined.



Uttarakhand LULC - 2018

Uttarakhand LULC - 2023

As an example of even at a granular level Land Use and Land Cover (LULC) data has shown a case of Chamoli district. Increase in built areas (building constructions) in Chamoli during 2018 to 2023 can be seen distinctly visually.



Source: ESRI 10m resolution satellite imagery data

Built areas in Uttarakhand has grown by more than 35% and snow covered areas decreased by 3.41% even within a span of five years from 2018 to 2023

District	Built Area 2018 (Sq. Km.)	Snow Cover 2018 (Sq. Km.)	Built Area 2023 (Sq. Km.)	Snow Cover 2023 (Sq. Km.)	% Change in Built Area 2018-23	% Change in Snow Cover 2018-23
Almora	69.2	0.0	122.4	0.0	76.80	-
Bageshwar	21.6	187.4	34.4	220.4	58.70	17.59
Chamoli	12.3	1451.7	20.6	1492.8	67.73	2.83
Champawat	44.0	0.0	74.6	0.0	69.41	-
Dehradun	390.4	0.0	461.8	0.0	18.30	-
Haridwar	229.6	0.0	273.9	0.0	19.29	-
Nainital	270.6	0.0	355.3	0.0	31.30	-
Pauri Garhwal	86.3	0.0	150.7	0.0	74.57	-
Pithoragarh	58.0	1332.5	91.9	1150.7	58.50	-13.65
Rudraprayag	12.9	176.1	20.5	198.5	58.52	12.74
Tehri Garhwal	76.7	160.2	163.8	140.8	113.51	-12.13
Udham Singh Nagar	304.4	0.0	370.9	0.0	21.83	-
Uttarkashi	32.6	1207.7	36.3	1158.3	11.41	-4.09
Uttarakhand	1608.8	4515.6	2177.0	4361.4	35.32	-3.41

Source: ESRI 10m resolution satellite imagery data

What Next

- **Can these destinations with over tourism sustain their tourism activities in long run? Places like Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri etc. are already over crowded by tourists. What are the ways to restrict these large number of tourists to make these places vulnerable at some point of time in near future, if not already?**
- **Can we create certain ways to provide infrastructure without destroying the very basic ecosystem of these places? Beyond a point these places cannot sustain if the ecosystem breaks.**
- **What are the policy options to promote local involvement in tourism, not only in terms of jobs or providing services to tourists, but in restoring local environments, local culture and heritages.**
- **Promoting homestays may solve problems these challenges to some extent to new infrastructure building with reference accommodation sector. But policy options need to be to figured out on how policies are transferred from paper to grass root level implementation.**

THANK YOU

Please share your comments to dripto@ascension.org.in