

Harijans of Bangladesh



Harijans of Bangladesh



Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and
Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

2019

Imprint

Harijans of Bangladesh

Text

Hossain Zillur Rahman and Sabrina Miti Gain

Cover, photos and design

Philip Gain

Page layout

Prosad Sarker

Published by

Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

Green Valley, Flat No. 2A, House No. 147/1 (2nd Floor)

Green Road, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

T: 88-02-58153846, F: 88-02-48112109

E: sehd@sehd.org, www.sehd.org

Published: 2019

Printed by: Jahan Traders

ISBN: 978-984-94339-6-5

Price: Tk.100 US\$5

Copyright © Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and
Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union and ICCO COOPERATION. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the publisher and can no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union and ICCO COOPERATION.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotes used in connection with reviews and articles written for publication in magazines or newspapers, no part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced, stored in retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without prior written permission of the author and the publisher.

Contents

Imprint	iii
Preface	v-vii
Executive Summary	1-3
Introduction to the Community	3-4
Background to the Study	4
Objectives of the Study	4
Methodology	5
Limits of the Study	5
Study Locations	6-9
Findings	10-39
▪ Population	
▪ Education	
▪ Housing	
▪ Health and Sanitation Facilities	
▪ Electricity and Other Energy Sources	
▪ Income and Expenditure of the Families	
▪ Land and Non-land Assets	
▪ Access to Services	
▪ Economic Condition	
▪ Access to Safety Net Programmes	
▪ Recreation	
Social Capital, Changes and Aspirations	40-42
Problem Analysis	42-45
Possible Solutions to the Problems	45
Needs and Aspirations	45-46
Life in Harijan Colonies	47-48

Preface

The Harijans are an occupational group from the fifth category of the Hindu casteism who are traditionally known as ‘sweepers’. The Harijans can be found sweeping and cleaning garbage in city corporations and municipalities all over the country except for three cities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Brought to what is now Bangladesh more than 200 years ago by the British rulers to work as cleaners in cities, they are still not categorized separately as a single occupational group in the official statistics of Bangladesh.

A few sources estimate the number of Harijans living in the country between 100,000 and 1.5 million. Bangladesh Harijan Yokkho Parishad estimates that there are 124 Harijan or sweeper colonies in 55 districts of the country.

There are a few research and studies on the Harijans in Bangladesh who remain mostly invisible. Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) took lead in conducting a study on the Harijans with assistance from Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) and a leading rights-based organization of the community—Bangladesh Harijan Yokkho Parishad—under a European Union and ICCO Cooperation-funded project. The study was conducted in 46 of the most populous and well-known Harijan or ‘sweeper’ colonies in 37 districts of the country with a population of 39,017.

The objective of the study was to prepare a comprehensive map on the current situation of the Harijans and the difficulties they face, which will be an important tool for dialogue and advocacy for the community. The research outcomes added to the existing literature will add value to the discussion on social exclusion of Harijans in Bangladesh. Detailed information about the Harijans in their most populous and well-known locations as well as the state of their habitation, education, health, income, expenditure, access to different government facilities among others are valuable knowledge to make the community statistically visible.

The study findings are organized in two sections—quantitative findings on the demographic and socioeconomic condition of the Harijans and qualitative findings on their social capital, changes and aspirations.

The majority of the Harijans still work as cleaners in city corporations and municipalities throughout the country. Harijan women constitute a significant percentage of these cleaners. The fresh finds of the study include significant wage discrepancies in different districts for the same cleaner position, which is one of many irregularities that the Harijans face. There is no fixed pay scale for the cleaners in different city corporations and municipalities; this creates opportunities to exploit the extreme poor Harijans in the less developed districts of the country.

People from majority Muslim and Hindu population are now willing to work as cleaners, a job they were reluctant to do before the modernization of sanitation system. Therefore job opportunity as cleaners is decreasing at an alarming rate for the traditional 'sweepers'. The government reserved 80% quota for the Harijans in all recruitments for cleaners in municipalities and city corporations of the country. In reality, this policy is not implemented. The leaders of Bangladesh Harijan Yokkho Parishad report that the Harijans make up less than 40% of the cleaners employed by the Dhaka City Corporation.

Corruption, bribery and preference of Bangalees over the Harijans in recruitment of cleaners greatly affects the livelihood of the Harijans. On the other hand, it is very difficult for the young educated Harijans to enter in new fields of jobs because of their identity. They are usually employed in other jobs only if they change their last names and hide their ancestral roots.

However, the most shocking reality for the Harijans is the racial discrimination they still face on a daily basis. In some parts of the country, they are still treated as 'untouchables'. They are often referred as *methor* or 'sweeper' to belittle and disrespect their occupation of cleaning garbage and dirt. In the past, they were not even allowed to walk in front of restaurants. Even now there are incidents where they are not allowed to sit with Bangalees in restaurants or offered food and drinks in separate plate and glasses that will not be used by others.

Even in schools, the Harijan children are discriminated because of their identity. There are incidents where the school authority makes the Harijan students clean the school toilets. The Bangalee teachers and students treat them with disrespect. Such extreme discrimination does not occur in Dhaka and other city corporations but it is not uncommon in the less developed municipalities.

This study was conducted by a team of PPRC staff supervised by Hossain Zillur Rahman, lead researcher of the project. The strategy and tools of the participatory research were developed by the research team of PPRC, SEHD and members from the Harijan community.

A team of 17 field researchers from the community carried out the FGDs in 46 Harijan colonies. They are Mahendra Laal, Kishan Babu Riki, Sonu Rani Das, Hridoy Das, Krishnagopal Das, Raju Das, Ajoy Biswas, Sri Niranjana Kumar Biswas, Sri Gopal Chandra Biswas, Hridoy Bashfore, Tapu Bhakto, Siba Das, Dhubo Bashfore, Ajoy Das, Ashish Das, Rajesh Bashfore and Bongshal Harijan. Uchan Aoung, research officer, supervised the field team.

The data was analyzed using computer software packages including SPSS and Microsoft Excel by late Iftekhar Ahmed, data analyst. The documentation and data

analysis process were supervised by Subodh Chandra Sarker, data manager and Sabrina Miti Gain, research associate. The main report and graphical presentations were prepared by Sabrina Miti Gain under the guidance of Hossain Zillur Rahman.

Special thanks go to Nirmol Chandra Das, general secretary of Bangladesh Harijan Yokkho Parishad (BHOP), Bishnu Sarker, general secretary of BHOP (Jashore), Krishna Laal Sarker, Kalu Bashfor, general secretary of BHOP Syedpur and other members of the organization and the community who assisted the research team in every step of the study and participated in the consultation meetings.

In the production of the book, Prosad Sarker and Md. Mozharul Haque have worked in setting up pages and printing. Dr. S. G. Hussain, a cartographer prepared the map used in the monograph. Many thanks to them.

Philip Gain, program director of the project under which this study has been possible guided the entire study team and did the final editing of the texts. He has also contributed photographs used in this report and has designed the cover and the report. We are particularly thankful to him.

We hope that the Harijan community and those interested in them will find the study findings presented in this monograph useful.

Hossain Zillur Rahman

Sabrina Miti Gain

Multistoried building at the Miron Jillah Harijan City Colony in Dhaka.





Amirilal, pradhan or
sardar of Old Sadar
Hospital Colony, Rangpur:-

Executive Summary

The Harijans are an occupational group or community from the fifth category of the Hindu casteism who are traditionally ‘sweepers’ or cleaners working in the city corporations and municipalities of Bangladesh. Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) conducted a study on the Harijans in 46 of the most populous and well-known Harijan or ‘sweeper’ colonies or quarters in 37 districts of the country. The study found that 39,017 Harijans occupies these colonies, who belong to 6,103 families.

The percentage of men in the Harijan community is 32.15% in comparison to 29.54% women, which is also reflected in the sex ratio of 108.86. On the other hand, 38.31% of the Harijan population consists of children. The average family size of the Harijans is 6.34, which is higher than the family size at the national level at 4.06 (HIES 2016). In majority of the districts, the number of the Harijan families have increased since 2007.

Education level of the Harijans above 18 years of age is extremely low in most of the districts. Half of the Harijan population above 18 years are either illiterate or has letter knowledge only. On average, only 21.83% and 16.15% have completed primary and secondary education respectively. A meagre 5.89% of the Harijans completed Secondary School Certificate (SSC). Less than 5% Harijans have completed Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC), graduation or Master’s education. However, the majority of the Harijan children (5-18 years old) are currently studying with a high percentage of 76.28% on average.

The majority of the Harijan families live in semi-pukka houses (49.52%) in the ‘sweeper’ colonies and quarters. In some districts almost all of the Harijan families live in semi-pukka houses. However, the living space for a family is 130.20 square feet on average.

Nearly half of the Harijan families (48.54%) drink pipe line or tap water as they live in cities and municipalities. In some districts, all of the Harijan families drink tap water. The other half of the Harijan families drink water from either deep tube well or tube well.

A shocking 71.04% of the Harijan families have to share a toilet in the colony with five and more number of families. In some of the districts, all the Harijan families have to share toilets. In Dhaka, 76.67% Harijan families have to share toilets with a huge number of people. On the other hand, nearly 12% families share toilets with four to five families

and only 11% families have their own toilet.

On average 69.85% Harijan families use wood for cooking purposes as pipeline gas is not supplied to their colonies. On the other hand, 20.30% Harijan families use kerosene, which is used for both cooking and as a source of light. On average, 17.35% families use cylinder gas, which is used for cooking purposes only. On the other hand, 94.46% Harijan households have access to electricity on average.

The main occupation of nearly all of the Harijan families is working as cleaners in the city corporations and municipalities of the country. On average, the income earners of 95.52% Harijan families work as cleaners or 'sweepers'. Only 2.41% Harijan families provide other services in government or private organizations. On average, women of 60.33% Harijan families are cleaners in city corporations, municipalities or other organizations. The rest of the Harijan women from 37.78% of the families are housewives.

The average monthly income of the Harijan cleaners is Taka 10,301. Their monthly income ranges from Taka 1,020 to Taka 20,000 in different districts. The average expenditure of the Harijan families is Taka 16,157, which is significantly higher than their average monthly income at Taka 10,301 for the cleaners. They spend most on food, education, fuel and utility bills on a monthly basis.

A significant percentage of the Harijan families are in debt. Around 78% Harijan families are indebted on average. The income from working as cleaners is not sufficient to purchase their monthly necessities. The study found that 61% families meet their monthly expenditure from their income. On the other hand, nearly 32% families pay for their monthly expenditure by taking loans. Only 0.85% of the Harijan families depend on Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) to meet their monthly expenditure and 0.22% on financial aid.

No one from the Harijan community own crop land. The majority of the Harijans occupy the land on which their colonies or quarters are situated but they have no ownership of the land. It was found that 95.48% of the Harijan families in the country do not own homestead or arable land. The average size of land they occupy is less than one decimal (0.68 decimal). However, majority of the Harijan families own mobile phones (92.7%) and televisions (83%).

There are different organizations of the Harijans including Bangladesh Harijan Yokkho Parishad that contribute to the capacity building of the community. For this study, several dimensions were considered in order to identify the recent changes that occurred in the Harijan community including their occupation, education, migration, social status, communication and family titles. Nearly 95% of the community believe

that the changes have been positive.

The main problems identified by the Harijans include lack of land ownership and poor habitation, low education rate, poor quality of latrine, decreasing employment opportunities, discrimination in employment and social stigma, deprivation from government facilities including safety net programmes and fuel and water crisis. They also suggested possible solutions to the problems.

The main needs and aspirations of the Harijans are rehabilitation and renovation of their colonies, new employment opportunities and financial solvency, increasing educational facilities and increasing the quality of latrine facilities among others.

Introduction to the Community

People outside the caste system in Hinduism are often referred as the fifth category or 'untouchables'. Mahatma Gandhi, Indian revolutionary leader, called them 'Harijan' or children of God. They are also referred as Dalits but both words are considered either condescending or offensive by many. The traditional lower caste Hindu cleaners or 'sweepers' in Bangladesh refer to themselves as Harijan, which is largely unknown to the mainstream society. Instead they are widely known as *methor* (sweeper)—a term that signifies degradation and disgust—and their ghettos are known as sweeper colonies or quarters (Asaduzzaman 2001). In this monograph, 'Harijan' will refer to the occupational group or community from the fifth Hindu caste who are traditionally 'sweepers' or cleaners working in the city corporations and municipalities of Bangladesh.

The Harijans were brought to Bangladesh by the British rulers from different parts of India including the state of Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (RIB 2006). However, sweepers and a sweeping system existed in Dhaka and other parts of Bengal even before the British rule. In the mid 18th century, the British occupied the region and brought new administration for development of township, which required hiring of sanitation workers. However, the Muslims and higher caste Hindus considered sweeping the streets and cleaning sewage repulsive and unholy. So the British employed middlemen or agents to hire mainly poverty-stricken Hindus belonging to lower castes from the less developed states of India.

The original occupations of the Harijans were making bamboo handicrafts, doing agricultural work, cremating dead bodies, etc. They were allured with the prospect of better jobs, housing and medical facilities in an assumed affluent East Bengal (Asaduzzaman 2001 and RIB 2006). Instead they have been employed in sweeping and cleaning city garbage for more than 200 years. The story of Harijans is very similar to that of the tea

workers who were brought to the tea gardens by the British rulers.

There are mainly eight *gotro* or sub-groups among the Harijans—Hela, Domar, Hari, Bashfore, Rauth, Balmiki, Lalbegi, and Dom (who traditionally cremate dead bodies and work in morgues). They also use the names of their *gotros* as their surnames. Some other titles used by Harijans are Robidas, Laalbegi, Pashi, Goala, Hari, Rao, Bowali and Telku. All the sub-groups of the Harijans have their own unique culture, rituals and languages including different dialects of Hindi, Bhojpuri, Tamil and Bangla (RIB 2006).

Background to the Study

The study is a mapping exercise on the demographic and socioeconomic conditions of the Harijans in Bangladesh under a European Union-funded project “Defining the excluded groups, mapping their current status and strengthening their capacity and partnership.” Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) took lead in conducting the study with assistance from Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) and a local organization, Bangladesh Horijan Yokkho Parishad. The study is conducted to prepare a comprehensive map on the current situation of the Harijans and the difficulties they face, which will be an important tool for dialogue and advocacy for the community. The research outcomes added to the existing literature will add value to the discussion on social exclusion of Harijans in Bangladesh. (For more on the Harijans and other excluded communities of Bangladesh, see “State of the Marginal and Excluded Communities”).

Objectives of the Study

The key objective of the study is to develop a comprehensive map, analysis, and clarity on the Harijans, which will become strategic tools for the human rights defenders and organizations who work with this community. Detailed information about the Harijans in their most populous and well-known locations as well as the state of their habitation, education, health, income, expenditure, access to different government facilities among others are valuable knowledge to make the community statistically visible. The study also aimed to identify the most recent changes in their lives, their problems and possible solutions as well as their needs and aspirations. Another objective of the study was to engage the community members in participatory research process for the broader goal of capacity building.

Methodology

Research team: The lead researcher of the project, the programme director and the in-house research team developed the strategies and methodologies for the participatory research. They had discussions with the community representatives to finalize the choice of research instruments and study locations. Training of field researchers and community key informants were also conducted by the team.

Sample design: The Harijans live in community clusters, which is the case for most of the excluded communities in Bangladesh. The research approach was to identify these community clusters and select a reasonable sample of such clusters to collect both cluster-level as well as household-level information. According to Bangladesh Harijan Yokkho Parishad (BHOP), an organization promoting rights of the Harijans in Bangladesh, there are 104 Harijan colonies in 55 districts of the country. The community leaders and researchers of the project selected the number and location of the colonies that are to be mapped. Selective or purposive sampling method was applied to select the Harijan clusters. After consultations with the community leaders, a sample of 46 most populous colonies of the Harijans were selected that would represent the community most accurately. The sample covered 37 districts.

Data collection and analysis: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with participation of around 15-20 community members at the cluster sites were conducted to collect data for the study. The structured FGD questionnaire was utilized to generate quantitative information on household characteristics as well as qualitative information on cluster characteristics. The study was conducted from 17 September 2017 to 2 November 2017. A team of 17 field researchers who belong to the Harijan community carried out the FGDs in 46 cluster sites, which was supervised by the research officer. The collected data was analyzed using a statistical tool—SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The collected data was interpreted along with tabular and graphical presentations to write the monograph.

Limits of the Study

The study could not update the list of all the Harijan colonies and quarters in 55 districts of Bangladesh, provided by Bangladesh Harijan Yokkho Parishad (BHOP), due to lack of accessibility and time constraint. For the study, a sample was selected that would be most representative of the entire community. Accessibility and availability of information during both primary and secondary data collection were other major constraints of the study. Moreover, the study was based on FGDs. A household survey could have generated a more concrete database, which was not possible due to resource constraints.

Study Locations

Following are the locations of 46 sample clusters of the Harijan community in 37 districts:

SL. No.	District	Thana/ upazila	Post office	Ward	Colony/quarter
1	Dhaka	Bongshal	GPO	33	Miron Jillah City Colony
		Gendaria	Dhaka Mohanagar	40	Wari City Colony
		Hazaribagh	New Market	22	Ganaktuli City Colony
2	Narayanganj	Sonargaon	Kanchpur	4	Uttar Senpara
		Narayanganj Sadar	Narayanganj Sadar	15	Tanbazar City Colony
3	Manikganj	Manikganj Sadar	ManikganjSadar	6	Pashchim Daspara
4	Mymensingh	Mymensingh Kotwali	Mymensingh Sadar	10	Natun Bazar Railgate Harijan Polli
5	Jamalpur	Jamalpur Sadar	Jamalpur 2000	6	Bojropur Harijan Colony
6	Sherpur	Sherpur Sadar	SherpurSadar	7	Sajbarkhila Harijan Colony
7	Rajshahi	Rajapara thana (Rajshahi Metropolitan)	GPO	6	Laxmipur Baganpara (IEV)
		Boalia thana (Rajshahi Metropolitan)		11	Hatem Kha Harijan Colony
8	Chapain-awab-ganj	Chapainawabganj Sadar	Chapainawabganj Sadar	15	Municipality Harijan Colony (Islampur)
9	Natore	NatoreSadar	Natore Sadar	1	Choukirpar Harijan Colony
10	Bogura	Bogura Sadar	Bogura Sadar	3	Shibbati Katnarpara Harijan Colony
				4	Chamragudam Municipality Harijan Colony
11	Sirajganj	Sirajganj Sadar	Sirajganj Sadar	12	Sirajganj Municipality Harijan Colony
12	Pabna	Pabna Sadar	Pabna Sadar	7	Municipality Harijan Colony (Ramchandrapur)
13	Jhenaidah	Jhenaidah Sadar	Jhenaidah Sadar	7	Pani Unnayan Board Jhenaidah
14	Magura	Magura Sadar	Magura Sadar	9	Matrisadan Harijan Colony
15	Meherpur	Meherpur Sadar	Meherpur Sadar	2	Malopara Meherpur
16	Chuadanga	Damurhuda	Darshana	2	Amtala Harijan Colony

17	Kushtia	Kumarkhali	Kumarkhali Sadar	6	Serkandi
		Kushtia Sadar	Mohini Mills	10	Harijan Chaitanna Polli
18	Faridpur	Faridpur Sadar	Alipur	8	Alipur Bandhob Polli
19	Rajbari	Rajbari Sadar	Binodpur	3	Bibekananda Polli
20	Barishal	Kaunia	Barishal Sadar	2	Kaunia Panir Tank Harijan Colony
21	Bagerhat	Bagerhat Sadar	Bagerhat Sadar	7	Railway Harijan Colony
22	Khulna	Khulna City	Khulna Sadar	21	5, 6 No. Ghat Harijan Colony
23	Jashore	Jashore Kotowali	Jashore Sadar	6	Rail station Harijan Colony
				2	R N Road Harijan Colony
24	Brahman- baria	Brahmanbaria Sadar	Brahmanbaria Sadar	5	Poura (Municipal) Sweeper Colony
25	Cumilla	Cumilla Kotowali	Cumilla Sadar	17	Sujanagar Harijan Colony
26	Chandpur	Chandpur Sadar	Chandpur Sadar 3600	7	Railway Harijan Colony
27	Gazipur	Tongi Sadar	Tongi Sadar	4	Amtali Harijan Colony
28	Kishoreganj	Kishoreganj Sadar	Kishoreganj Sadar	6	32 Harijan Colony
29	Sylhet	Sylhet Sadar	Sylhet Sadar	14	Kashtoghar
30	Moulvibazar	Moulvibazar Sadar	Matarkapon	7	Pouro (Municipal) Shebok Nibash
31	Chattogram	Jhautola	Jhautola		Love Lane Harijan Colony
		Madarbari	Madarbari		Shebok Harijan Colony
32	Cox's Bazar	Cox's Bazar Sadar	Cox's Bazar Sadar		IBP Maath Pouro (Mu- nicipal) Harijan Colony
33	Nilphamari	Syedpur	Syedpur	5	Munshipara Sweeper Colony
34	Joypurhat	Joypurhat Sadar	Joypurhat Sadar	1, 9*	Sugar Mill Railway Sweeper Bosti
35	Dinajpur	Dinajpur Sadar	Dinajpur Sadar	7	Balubari Harijan Colony
36	Lalmonirhat	Lalmonirhat Sadar	Lalmonirhat Sadar	3, 7**	Store Para & Driver Para
37	Gaibandha	Gaibandha Sadar	Gaibandha Sadar	8	Kacharipara Sweeper Colony
		Saghata	Bonarpara	4	Bonarpara Harijan Colony

*Sugar Mill Colony – Ward No. 1 and Railway Colony–Ward No. 9

**Store Para Colony – Ward No. 3 and Driver Para Colony–Ward No. 7

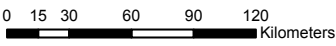


Miron Jillah Harijan City Colony
in Old Dhaka, the largest sweeper
colony in Bangladesh.



Miron Jillah Harijan City
Colony seen from outside.

Locations of Study on Harijans



Legend

- Study Locations
- Upazila Boundary
- District Boundary
- International Boundary
- Bay of Bengal
- Char or Sandbars
- River
- rail_bd_btm
- Major Roads



Cartography: S. G. Hussain

Findings

Population

The Harijans or sweepers work in city corporations, municipalities and government and private organizations all over the country except for three districts in the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT). They are not categorized separately as a single occupational group in the official statistics of Bangladesh (Asaduzzaman 2001). A few studies estimated the number of the Harijans living in the country. According to one source, the estimated 'sweeper' population is one hundred thousand in the country (Asaduzzaman 2001). According to other sources, there are 1.5 million Harijans scattered throughout Bangladesh (Bangladesh Horijan Yokkho Parishad; Ariquzzaman 2014). Bangladesh Horijan Yokkho Parishad estimated that there are 124 Harijan or sweeper colonies or quarters in 55 districts of seven divisions of the country.

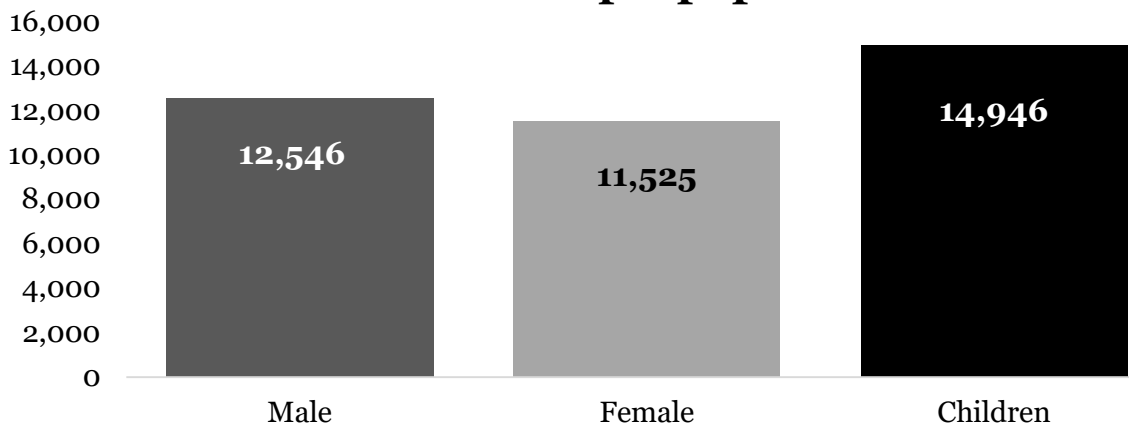
The PPRC study was conducted in 46 of the most populous and well-known colonies or quarters in 37 districts of the country and found 39,017 Harijans or 6,103 families occupying these colonies.

Table 1: Number of sample Harijan clusters, HHs and population

Districts	No. of sample clusters	No. of sample HHs	Sample population	Male	Female	Children
Dhaka	3	1,490	10,050	3,150	2,620	4,280
Narayanganj	2	320	1,410	537	395	478
Manikganj	1	45	235	95	105	35
Mymensingh	1	280	1,636	310	410	916
Jamalpur	1	63	514	147	167	200
Sherpur	1	85	495	170	115	210
Rajshahi	2	503	3,018	1,005	870	1,143
Chapai Nawabganj	1	51	306	100	100	106
Natore	1	92	684	238	166	280
Bogura	2	249	1,302	400	315	587
Sirajganj	1	95	480	230	180	70
Pabna	1	200	1,500	500	520	480
Jhenaidah	1	21	118	36	38	44

Magura	1	27	111	36	43	32
Meherpur	1	42	200	100	55	45
Chuadanga	1	82	850	350	250	250
Kushtia	2	102	625	223	243	159
Faridpur	1	101	570	201	206	163
Rajbari	1	86	359	141	79	139
Barishal	1	150	1,330	450	480	400
Bagerhat	1	50	300	70	100	130
Khulna	1	235	2,140	540	600	1,000
Jashore	2	210	1,330	450	450	430
Brahmanbaria	1	81	560	206	142	212
Cumilla	1	92	409	170	118	121
Chandpur	1	96	451	182	131	138
Gazipur	1	150	1,090	320	350	420
Kishoreganj	1	120	660	190	210	260
Sylhet	1	210	1,050	300	350	400
Moulvibazar	1	67	322	112	130	80
Chattogram	2	240	1,580	600	520	460
Cox's Bazar	1	35	240	100	80	60
Nilphamari	1	34	201	60	71	70
Joypurhat	1	108	475	150	130	195
Dinajpur	1	100	1,150	300	350	500
Lalmonirhat	1	95	502	174	157	171
Gaibandha	2	96	764	203	279	282
Total	46	6,103	39,017	12,546	11,525	14,946

Number of sample population



The percentage of men in the Harijan community is 32.15% in comparison to 29.54% women, which is also reflected in the sex ratio. The sex ratio is determined by calculating the number of male against every 100 female. The sex ratio is 108.86 in the Harijan community, which is higher than the national sex ratio at 100.3 (BBS Census 2011). In some of the districts there are more female Harijan adults than males. Around 38.31% of the Harijan population consists of children.

The average family size of Harijans is 6.34, which is higher than the family size at the national level at 4.06 (HIES 2016). The average family size is as high as 11.50 in Dinajpur district and the lowest in Magura district (4.11).

Table 2: Average HH size and sex composition

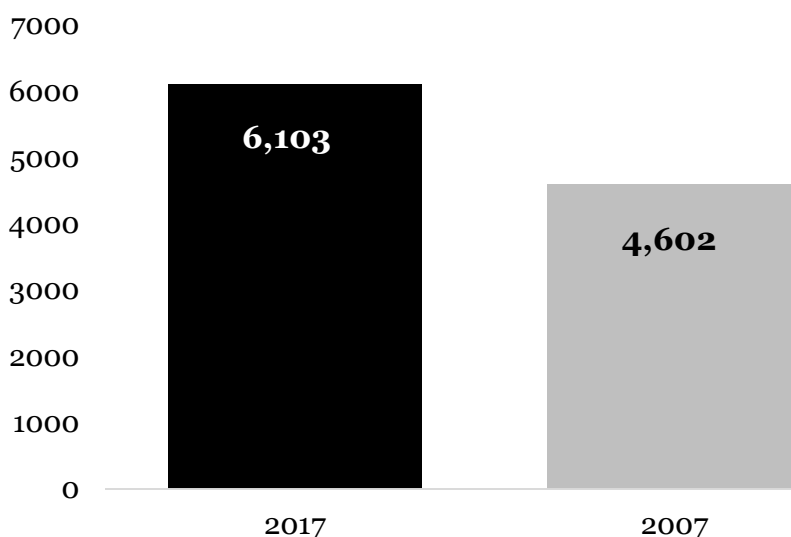
Districts	Average HH Size	Sex ratio	Districts	Average HH Size	Sex ratio
Dhaka	7.10	120.23	Barishal	8.87	93.75
Narayanganj	5.27	135.95	Bagerhat	6.00	70.00
Manikganj	5.22	90.48	Khulna	9.11	90.00
Mymensingh	5.84	75.61	Jashore	6.27	100.00
Jamalpur	8.16	88.02	Brahmanbaria	6.91	145.07
Sherpur	5.82	147.83	Cumilla	4.45	144.07
Rajshahi	6.00	115.52	Chandpur	4.70	138.93
Chapai	6.00	100.00	Gazipur	7.27	91.43
Nawabganj			Kishoreganj	5.50	90.48
Natore	7.43	143.37	Sylhet	5.00	85.71
Bogura	5.53	126.98	Moulvibazar	4.81	86.15
Sirajganj	5.05	127.78	Chattogram	6.50	115.38
Pabna	7.50	96.15	Cox's Bazar	6.86	125.00
Jhenaidah	5.62	94.74	Nilphamari	5.91	84.51
Magura	4.11	83.72	Joypurhat	4.40	115.38
Meherpur	4.76	181.82	Dinajpur	11.50	85.71
Chuadanga	10.37	140.00	Lalmonirhat	5.28	110.83
Kushtia	6.28	91.77	Gaibandha	8.14	72.76
Faridpur	5.64	97.57	Total	6.34	108.86
Rajbari	4.17	178.48			

In majority of the districts, the number of Harijan families have increased since 2007. On average the number of Harijan families was 6,103 in 2017 whereas there were 4,602 families in 2007. The highest number of families were found in Dhaka district. However, the number of Harijan families have decreased in the last ten years in several districts including Rajbari, Nilphamari, Joypurhat, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha.

Table 3: No. of HHs now and 10 years ago

Districts	No. of HHs (2007)	No. of HHs (2017)	Districts	No. of HHs (2007)	No. of HHs (2017)
Dhaka	1,090	1,490	Barishal	120	150
Narayanganj	225	320	Bagerhat	40	50
Manikganj	30	45	Khulna	170	235
Mymensingh	210	280	Jashore	140	210
Jamalpur	43	63	Brahman- baria	55	81
Sherpur	50	85	Cumilla	64	92
Rajshahi	325	503	Chandpur	69	96
Chapai	18	51	Gazipur	110	150
Nawabganj			Kishoreganj	70	120
Natore	52	92	Sylhet	150	210
Bogura	128	249	Moulvibazar	40	67
Sirajganj	65	95	Chattogram	185	240
Pabna	95	200	Cox's Bazar	28	35
Jhenaidah	18	21	Nilphamari	55	34
Magura	22	27	Joypurhat	148	108
Meherpur	30	42	Dinajpur	90	100
Chuadanga	50	82	Lalmonirhat	120	95
Kushtia	86	102	Gaibandha	131	96
Faridpur	80	101	Total	4,602	6,103
Rajbari	200	86			

Number of households (HHs)



Education

A large percentage (50.6%) of the Harijans are illiterate or have only letter knowledge in comparison to the national literacy rate of 70.38% (HIES 2016). Therefore, half of the Harijan population above 18 years are either illiterate or has letter knowledge only. On average, only 21.83% and 16.15% have completed primary and secondary education respectively. A meagre 5.89% of the Harijans completed Secondary School Certificate (SSC). Less than 5% Harijans have completed Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC), graduation or Master's education.

On average 40% or more Harijans are illiterate in Jhenaidah, Kushtia and Joypurhat districts with as high as 55% illiteracy rate in Narayanganj. Bagerhat is the district that is most backward in terms of education level of the Harijans. Almost the entire Harijan community in Bagerhat have letter knowledge only (87%). No one has completed secondary school or studied further in Jashore and Khulna. Half or more of the Harijan population have letter knowledge only in Jamalpur, Khulna and Jashore among several other districts.

On the other hand, nearly half of the Harijan population (45%) has completed primary schooling in Meherpur and secondary schooling in Chandpur. Half of the Harijans in Dinajpur has passed either SSC or HSC examinations. A relatively high 15% of the Harijans has graduated in Moulvibazar but in all other districts either less than 5% graduated or they did not go to the university in the first place.

Table 4: Education

Status	% of 18 years and above
Illiterate	21.74
Letters knowledge only	28.86
Primary	21.83
Secondary/equivalent	16.15
SSC/equivalent	5.89
HSC/equivalent	3.98
Graduate/equivalent	1.30
Master/equivalent/above	0.24

On average, 76.28% of the Harijan children (5-18 years old) are currently studying. In some districts, as high as 90% or more Harijan children now go to school. However, the majority of the Harijan children in Sylhet are not studying (70%). There are several other districts where half or more of the Harijan children do not go to school.

Education (18 years and above)

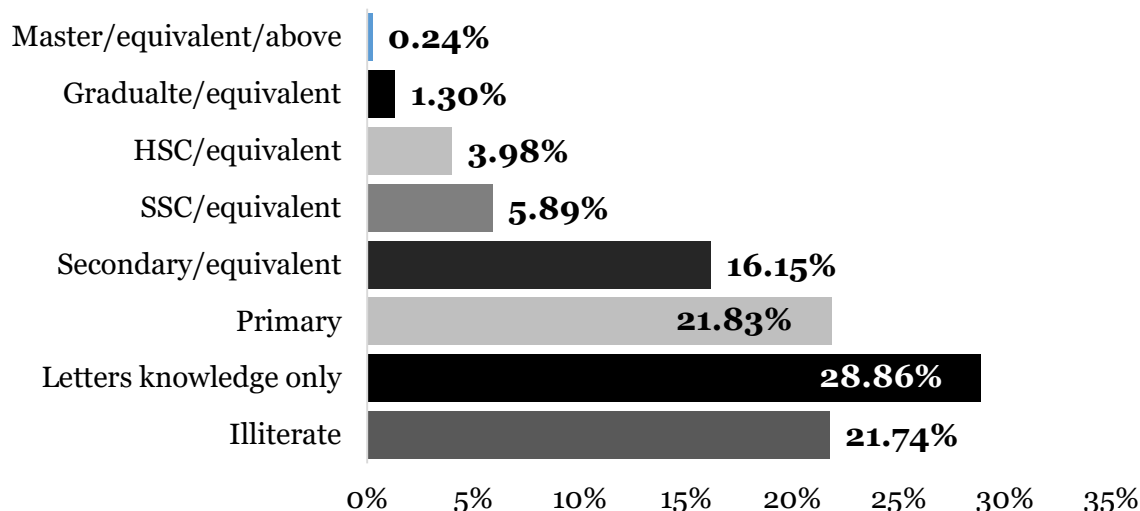


Table 5: Education (% of 5-18 years)

Districts	Status		Districts	Status	
	Studying	Not studying		Studying	Not studying
Dhaka	86.67	13.33	Barishal	80.00	20.00
Narayanganj	40.00	60.00	Bagerhat	75.00	25.00
Manikganj	80.00	20.00	Khulna	75.00	25.00
Mymensingh	85.00	15.00	Jashore	75.00	25.00
Jamalpur	70.00	30.00	Brahmanbaria	70.00	30.00
Sherpur	90.00	10.00	Cumilla	90.00	10.00
Rajshahi	80.00	20.00	Chandpur	92.00	8.00
Chapai	80.00	20.00	Gazipur	70.00	30.00
Nawabganj			Kishoreganj	85.00	15.00
Natore	60.00	40.00	Sylhet	30.00	70.00
Bogura	65.00	35.00	Moulvibazar	80.00	20.00
Sirajganj	98.00	2.00	Chattogram	70.00	30.00
Pabna	80.00	20.00	Cox's Bazar	70.00	30.00
Jhenaidah	90.00	10.00	Nilphamari	90.00	10.00
Magura	90.00	10.00	Joypurhat	95.00	5.00
Meherpur	60.00	40.00	Dinajpur	75.00	25.00
Chuadanga	90.00	10.00	Lalmonirhat	85.00	15.00
Kushtia	94.50	5.50	Gaibandha	77.50	22.50
Faridpur	40.00	60.00	Total	76.28	23.72
Rajbari	70.00	30.00			

Education (5-18 years)

Not studing
23.72%

Studying
76.28%



Harijan woman
at *Chhat Puja* in
Dinajpur.

Housing

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), there are four categories of housing structures—*jhupri* (temporary structures made of plastic, polythene, board, scraps, etc.); *kutchra* (semi-durable structures with wall and roof made of bamboo, wood, leaves, etc. that require some annual upgrading); *semi-pucka* (semi-permanent structures with brick wall and corrugated sheet roof) and *pucka* (permanent structures with brick wall and concrete roof). An additional category of housing structure, tin-shed, has been added in the study, which has corrugated sheet roof and wall.

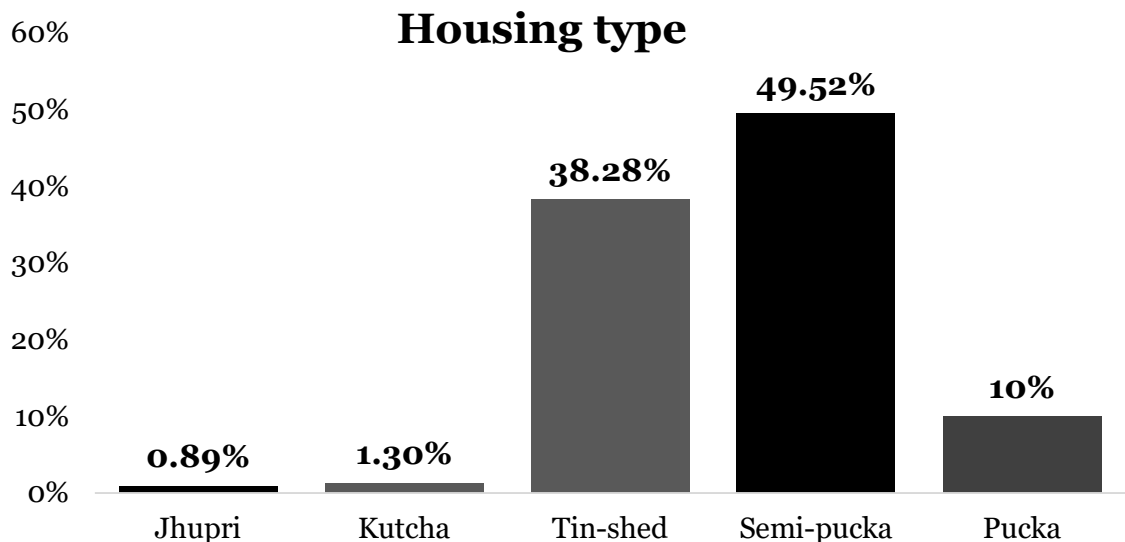
The majority of the Harijan families live in semi-pucka houses (49.52%) in the ‘sweeper’ colonies and quarters in the cities. In some districts almost all of the Harijan families live in semi-pucka houses. However, the houses are 130.20 square feet on average, which usually consists of one or two rooms. The average number of members in a Harijan family is above 6 and in some cases as high as 11, all of who live in a tiny room in the colonies or quarters. On average, 38.28% families live in tin-shed houses in similar or worse conditions. Only 10% families live in pucka houses on average.

Table 6: Housing condition

Housing type	% of HHs
Jhupri	0.89
Kutchra	1.30
Tin-shed	38.28
Semi-pucka	49.52
Pucka	10



A tiny living room in Jashore Harijan Colony.



The tin-shed houses of the Harijans are slightly bigger in size (154 square feet) than the semi-pucka and pucka houses. However, 154-square-foot rooms are also not spacious enough. In some districts, the house size is below 100 square feet. The pucka houses are 114 square feet on average where 10% of the Harijan families live. An insignificant percentage of Harijan families live in jhupri and kutcha houses.

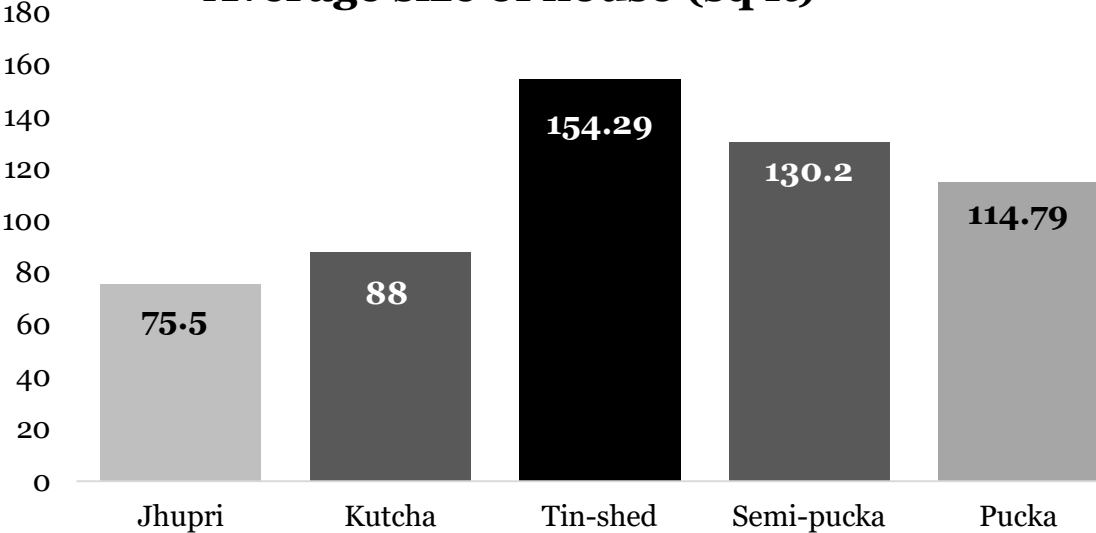
Table 7: Average size of houses

Housing type	Size (square feet)
Jhupri	75.50
Kutchha	88.00
Tin-shed	154.29
Semi-pucka	130.20
Pucka	114.79



Harijan women in grief at Gopibagh Railway Harijan colony.

Average size of house (sq ft)



Health and Sanitation Facilities

Sources of drinking water: At the national level, the main source of drinking water for the majority of the people in Bangladesh is tube well (HIES 2016). However, the supply of piped line water is abundant in the urban areas of the country. Since the Harijans live in cities or *sadars* to work for city corporations and municipalities, nearly half of the Harijan families (48.54%) drink pipe line or tap water. In some districts, all of the Harijan families drink tap water. The other half of the Harijan families drink water from either deep tube well or tube wells. None of the Harijan families drink water from ponds anymore.

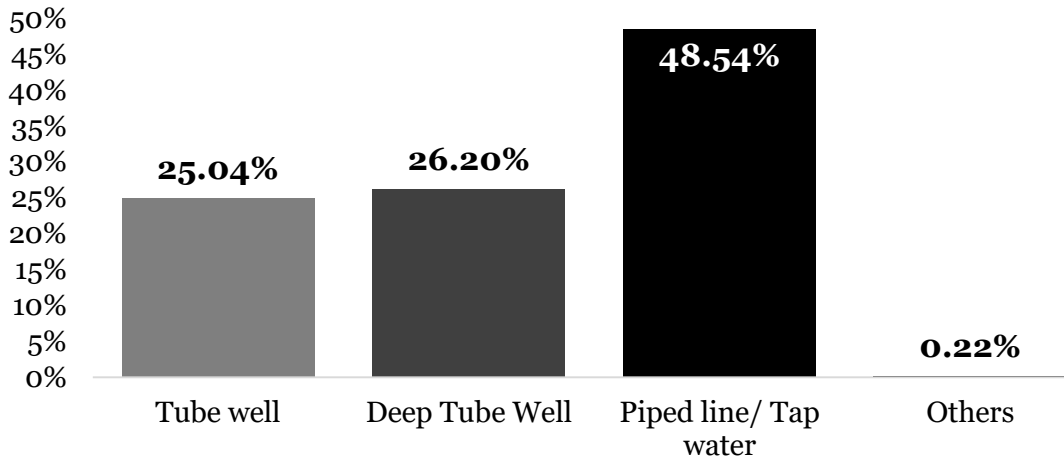
Table 8: Sources of drinking water

Sources	% of HHs
Tube well	25.04
Deep tube well	26.20
Piped line/tap water	48.54
Others	0.22



Common bath at Miron Jillah Harijan City colony.

Sources of drinking water

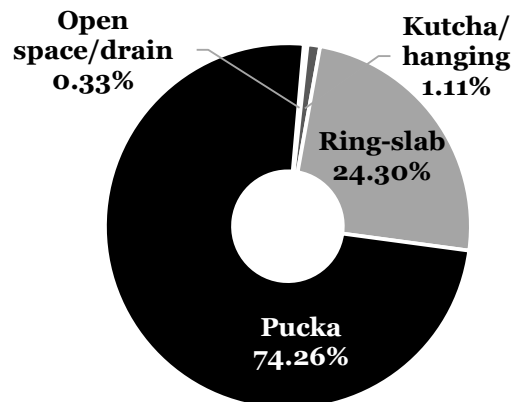


Latrine facilities: On average, 74.26% of the Harijan families use pukka toilets and 24.30% families use ring slabs. In majority of the districts, nearly all of the Harijan families either use pukka or ring slab toilets, which are usually sanitary, but it does not necessarily indicate the quality of latrine usage.

Table 9: Latrine facilities

Latrine type	% of HHs
Open space/drain	0.33
Kutch/hanging	1.11
Ring-slab	24.30
Pukka	74.26

Latrine facilities

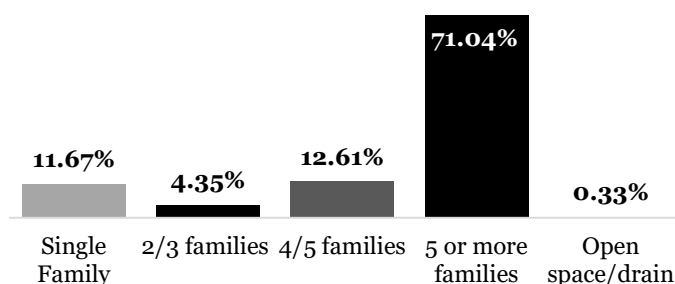


A shocking 71.04% of the Harijan families have to share a toilet in the colony with five and more number of families. In some of the districts, all the Harijan families have to share toilets in this manner. In Dhaka, 76.67% Harijan families have to share toilets with a huge number of people. On the other hand, nearly 12% families share toilets with four to five families and only 11% families have their own toilet in some of the districts.

Table 10: Types of latrine use

Facility	% of HHs
Single family	11.67
2/3 families	4.35
4/5 families	12.61
5 or more families	71.04
Open space/drain	0.33

Types of latrine use

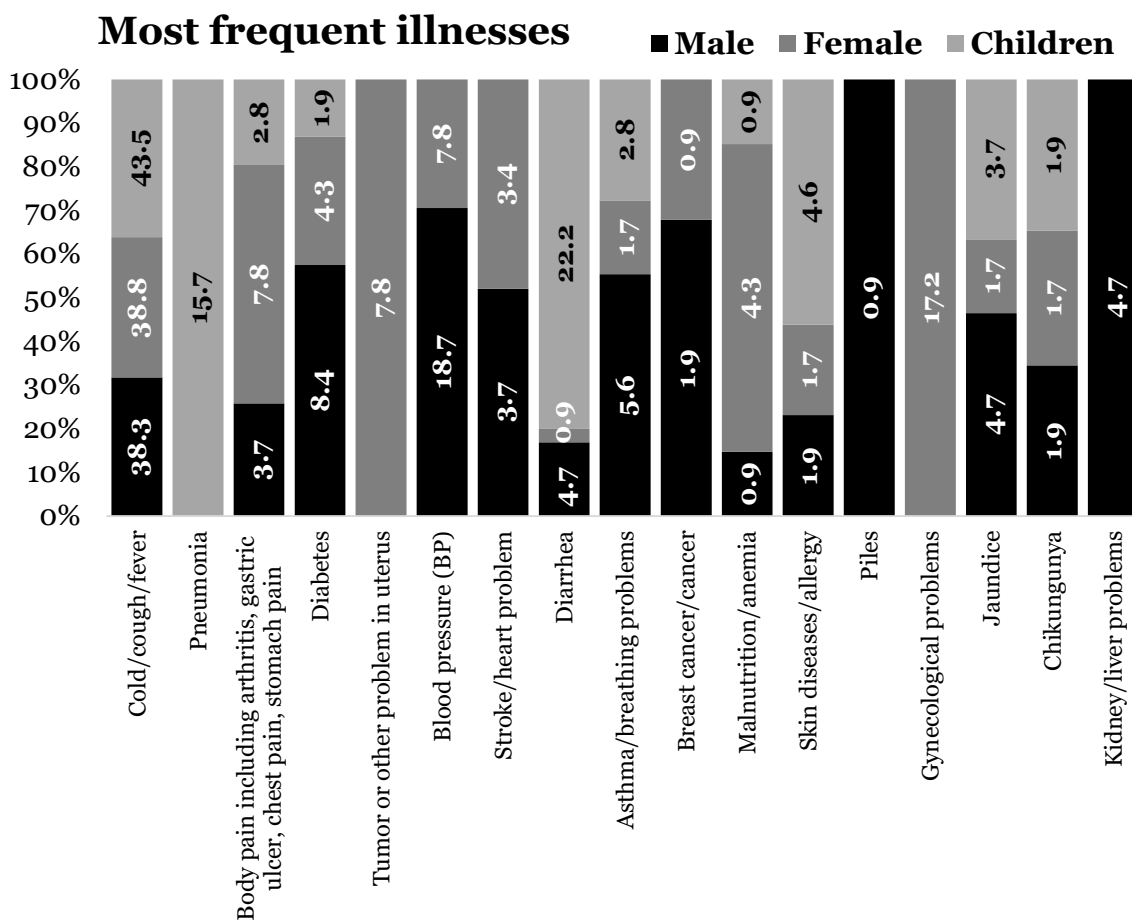


Most frequent illness: The most prevalent illness among the Harijans is cold, cough or fever. Some of the Harijans have suffered from Chikungunya as well. Some other common frequently occurred diseases are diarrhea and high blood pressure. More men suffer from irregular blood pressure than women. Women mainly suffer from gynecological problems, tumor or other problems in the uterus and different types of body pain. Children suffer from cold, cough or fever more than the adults. A significant percentage of Harijan children (15.7%) suffer from pneumonia as well. Nearly 22% of the children suffer from diarrhea.

Table 11: Most frequent illness of men, women and children (in %)

Types of diseases	Male	Female	Children	% of total cluster/ community
Cold/cough/fever	38.3	38.8	43.5	40.2
Pneumonia	-	-	15.7	5.1
Body pain including arthritis, gastric ulcer, chest pain, stomach pain	3.7	7.8	2.8	4.8
Diabetes	8.4	4.3	1.9	4.8
Tumor or other problem in uterus	-	7.8	-	2.7
Blood pressure (BP)	18.7	7.8	-	8.8
Stroke/heart problem	3.7	3.4	-	2.4

Diarrhea	4.7	.9	22.2	9.1
Asthma/breathing problems	5.6	1.7	2.8	3.3
Breast cancer/cancer	1.9	0.9	-	0.9
Malnutrition/anemia	0.9	4.3	0.9	2.1
Skin diseases/allergy	1.9	1.7	4.6	2.7
Piles	0.9	-	-	0.3
Gynecological problems	-	17.2	-	6.0
Jaundice	4.7	1.7	3.7	3.3
Chikungunya	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.8
Kidney/liver problems	4.7	-	-	1.5
Total	100	100	100	100



The majority of the Harijan community clusters under the study are satisfied with healthcare services available to them (82.1%). Nearly 9% of the community clusters are dissatisfied with services provided by nearby pharmacies and local physicians and 8.5% are dissatisfied with district government general hospitals.

Table 12: Satisfaction level of healthcare services (% of the community)

Treatment from where	Satisfaction level			
	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral
Upazila health complex	-	10.6	5.2	-
District Govt. General Hospital	5.8	49.1	8.5	1.2
Nearby pharmacy and local physician	2.1	49.1	9.4	0.3
Private hospital/clinic	0.3	19.1	2.7	0.6
Private doctor chamber	1.8	25.8	1.2	1.2
Traditional treatment	-	3.6	0.6	-
Community clinic	-	0.6	-	-
Union health & family planning center	0.3	1.2	-	-
Others	-	0.6	-	-
Total	7.0	82.1	9.7	1.2

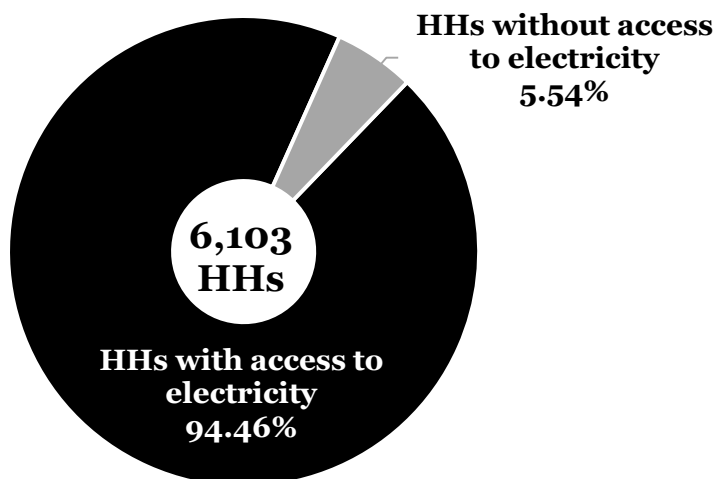
Electricity and Other Energy Sources

At the national level, 94.01% families in the cities of Bangladesh have access to electricity (HIES 2016). The Harijans live in the cities and *sadars* as they are mainly employed by municipalities and city corporations. It was found that 94.46% Harijan households have access to electricity on average. In most of the districts, electricity is available to 100% Harijan families. However, electricity is not supplied to 80% families in Lalmonirhat and 75% families in Nilphamari. The average duration of electricity supply in the Harijan households is 20.11 hours with lowest electricity supply duration being 16 hours.

Table 13: Electricity supply

Status	Electricity supply
% of HHs with access to electricity	94.46
% of HHs without access to electricity	5.54
Average duration (hours) of daily supply	20.11

Access to electricity

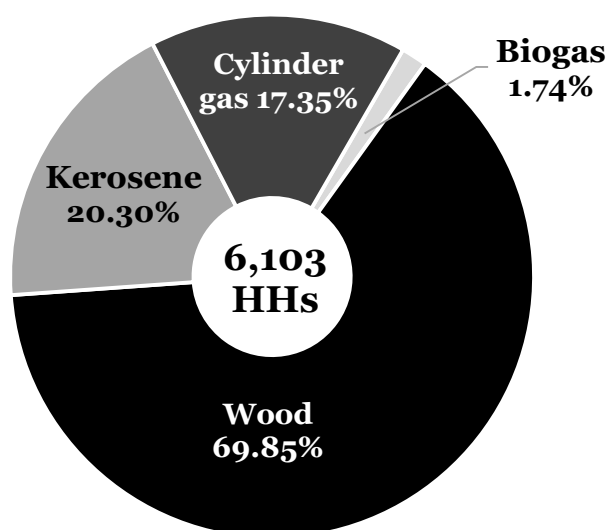


Other energy sources: On average, 69.85% Harijan families use wood as an alternative energy source to pipeline gas, which is not supplied to their colonies. They use wood mainly for cooking. In some of the districts, all of the Harijan families use wood to cook food. On the other hand, 20.30% Harijan families use kerosene, which is used for both cooking and as a source of light. On average, 17.35% families use cylinder gas, which is used for cooking purposes only. Only Harijan families in Cumilla were found using biogas as an energy source to cook. No Harijan family was found who used solar energy.

Table 14: Other energy sources

Status	% of HHs
Biogas	1.74
Wood	69.85
Kerosene	20.30
Cylinder gas	17.35

Energy sources



Income and Expenditure of the HHs

Major occupations: The main occupation of nearly all of the Harijan families is working as cleaners in city corporations and municipalities of the country. The Harijans also work as cleaners in other government and private organizations. On average, the income earners of 95.52% the Harijan families work as cleaners or 'sweepers'. Only 2.41% Harijan families provide other services in government or private organizations. The rest 2.07% of the families were found to be involved in small business, driving rickshaw or auto rickshaw, framing photos, repairing TVs as a mechanic, shop keeping and teaching among others.

Table 15: Major occupations (% of HHs)

Occupation					
Districts	Cleaner	Service holder (govt/ non-govt)	Districts	Cleaner	Service holder (govt/ non-govt)
Dhaka	93.67	3	Barishal	100	-
Narayanganj	98.50	-	Bagerhat	100	-
Manikganj	99	-	Khulna	100	-
Mymensingh	98	-	Jashore	100	-
Jamalpur	100	-	Brahmanbaria	100	-
Sherpur	100	-	Cumilla	100	-
Rajshahi	100	-	Chandpur	100	-
Chapai			Gazipur	100	-
Nawabganj	100	-	Kishoreganj	100	-
Natore	100	-	Sylhet	70	20
Bogura	100	-	Moulvibazar	90	10
Sirajganj	100	-	Chattogram	91	-
Pabna	85	-	Cox's Bazar	80	-
Jhenaidah	70	30	Nilphamari	100	-
Magura	80	20	Joypurhat	90	1
Meherpur	85	15	Dinajpur	100	-
Chuadanga	100	-	Lalmonirhat	100	-
Kushtia	96	3	Gaibandha	100	-
Faridpur	95	-	Total	95.52	2.41
Rajbari	100	-			

Occupations of women: The majority of the Harijan women work as cleaners. On average, women of 60.33% Harijan families are cleaners in city corporations, municipalities and other organizations. Only 1.67% of them are government or private service holders. The rest of the Harijan women from 37.78% of the families, are housewives. A tiny percentage of Harijan women (0.22% families) are teacher or seamstress.

Major occupations

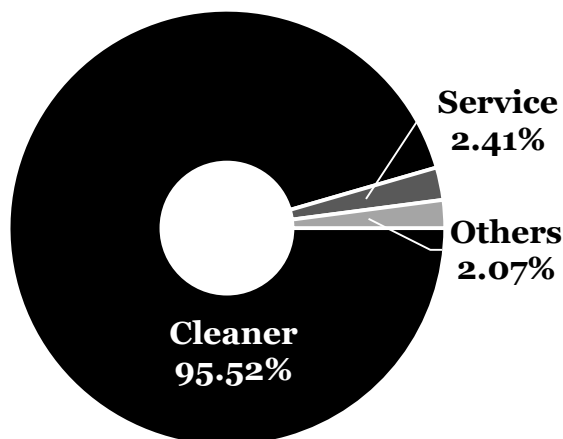
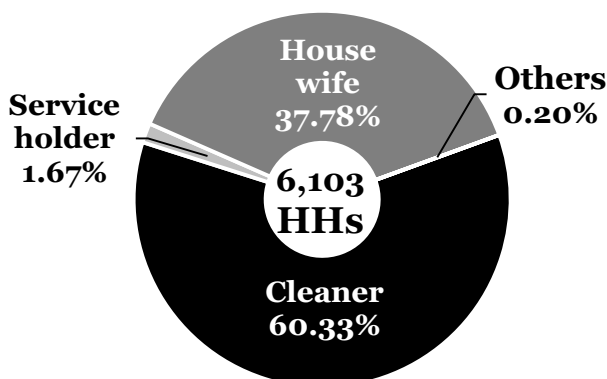


Table 16: Occupations of women

Occupations	% of HHs
Cleaner	60.33
Service holder (government/non-government)	1.67
House wife	37.78

Women's occupation

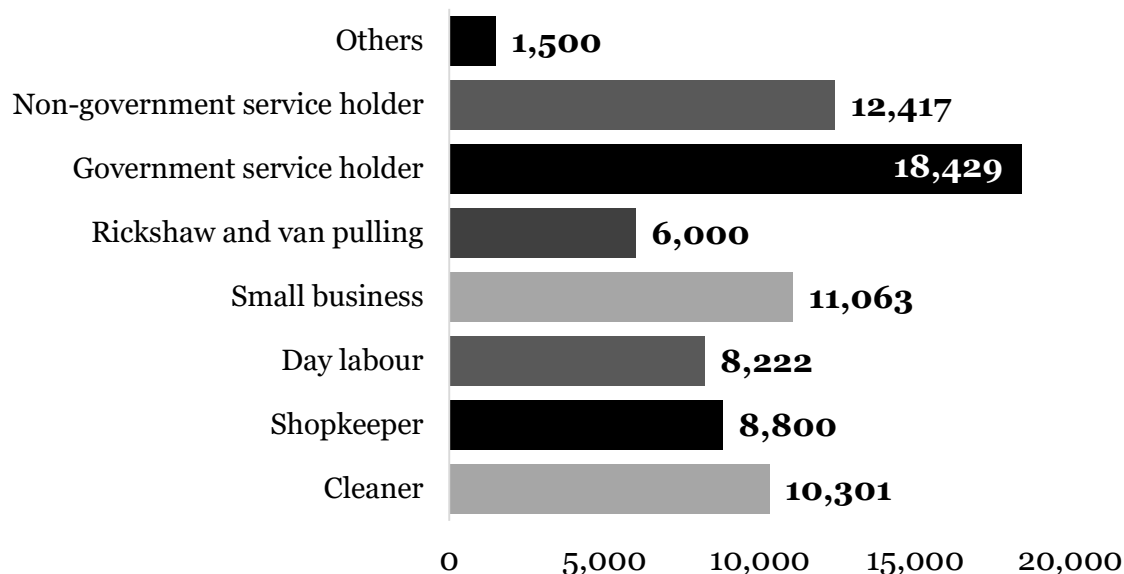


Average, highest and lowest monthly income: The average monthly income of the Harijan cleaners were found to be Taka 10,301. In the study, the lowest monthly income of the Harijan cleaners were found to be Taka 1,020 in Sylhet district. In several other districts, monthly income for Harijan cleaners is less than Tk. 5,000. The average monthly income of Harijans engaged in other government services is Taka 18,429 and for non-government institutions it is Taka 12,417. Overall, the average highest monthly income of the Harijans in all occupations is Taka 14,853 and average lowest income is Taka 4,952.

Table 17: Average monthly income

Occupations	Taka
Cleaner	10,301
Shopkeeper	8,800
Day labour	8,222
Small business	11,063
Rickshaw and van pulling	6,000
Government service holder	18,429
Non-government service holder	12,417
Others	1,500

Average monthly income (Taka)



Monthly expenditure: The monthly expenditure of a household at the national level is Taka 15,715 on average (HIES 2016). The average expenditure of the Harijan families is Taka 16,157, which is significantly higher than their average monthly income of Taka 10,301 for the cleaners. The Harijans spend Taka 7,573 on food items on average, which is their highest expenditure for a single item. At the national level, families also spend the biggest portion of their expenditure (47.69%) on food and beverages (HIES 2016). On average, the Harijans spend Taka 2,075 monthly to educate their children, which include tuition fee, study equipment etc.

They spend an average Taka 1,458 on fuel each month as there is no pipeline gas supply in the 'sweeper' colonies and quarters. They also have to pay utility bills of an average Taka 973, which include electricity and water bills. However, they usually do

not have to pay house rent as free accommodation is the only fringe benefit of working as sweepers. However, repairing houses is a big yearly burden as it is seen in Table 17. They also have to pay a significant amount of money on medical treatment, utility bills, transportation fares and other bills including mobile phone bills.

Table 18: Monthly HH expenditure (in Taka)

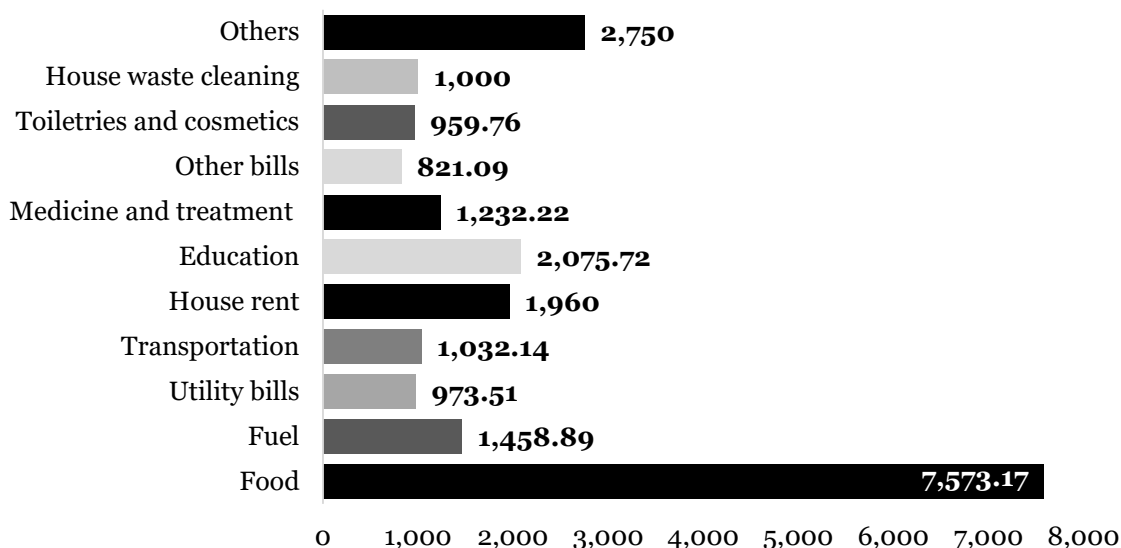
Expenditure head	HH average
Food*	7,573.17
Fuel*	1,458.89
Utility bills*	973.51
Transportation	1,032.14
House rent	1,960
Education*	2,075.72
Medicine and treatment	1,232.22
Other bills	821.09
Toiletries and cosmetics	959.76
House waste cleaning	1,000
Others*	2,750
Total	16,157.37



Harijan woman. Photo: Saydur Rahman

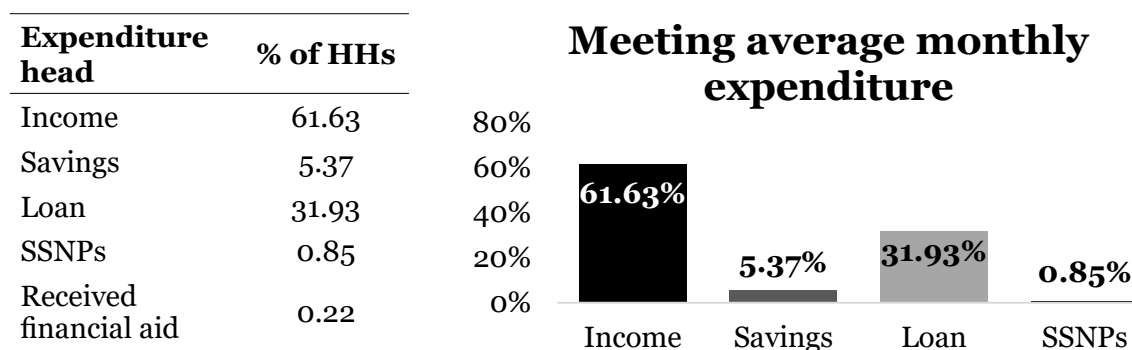
*Food=Rice, pulse, oil, salt, fish, meat, milk, vegetables, etc; Fuel=Wood/coal/kerosene/oil/cylinder gas, etc; Utility bills=Electricity/water/gas; Education=Tuition fee, study equipment; Other bills=Telephone, mobile, cable line, Internet bill, newspaper bill, etc.

Monthly expenditure (Taka)



The income from working as cleaners is not sufficient to purchase their monthly necessities. It was found in the study that 61% families can meet their monthly expenditure from their income. On the other hand, nearly 32% families also have to take loans to bear monthly expenditures. In Niphamari district, as high as 65% of the Harijan families pay for their daily necessities by taking loans. In several districts, 40-50% of the families meet their monthly expenditures by borrowing money for others. This indicates that a significant percentage of the Harijan families are in debt. On average, 5.37% families pay for their monthly necessities from their savings. Only 0.85% of the Harijan families get some benefits from Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) to meet their monthly expenditure and 0.22% on financial aid.

Table 19: Meeting average monthly expenditure



Yearly expenditure: There are some items for which families have to pay yearly that are not included in the monthly expenditure. The average yearly expenditure of the Harijans was Taka 128,482 in 2016-17, which included items like clothing and shoes, furniture, electronics, major medical treatments, education, religious and social events including marriage ceremonies among others. Among these items, they spend an average of Taka 26,287 on major medical treatments. Social events such as marriage ceremonies also make up a big portion of their yearly expenditure (Taka 23,833).

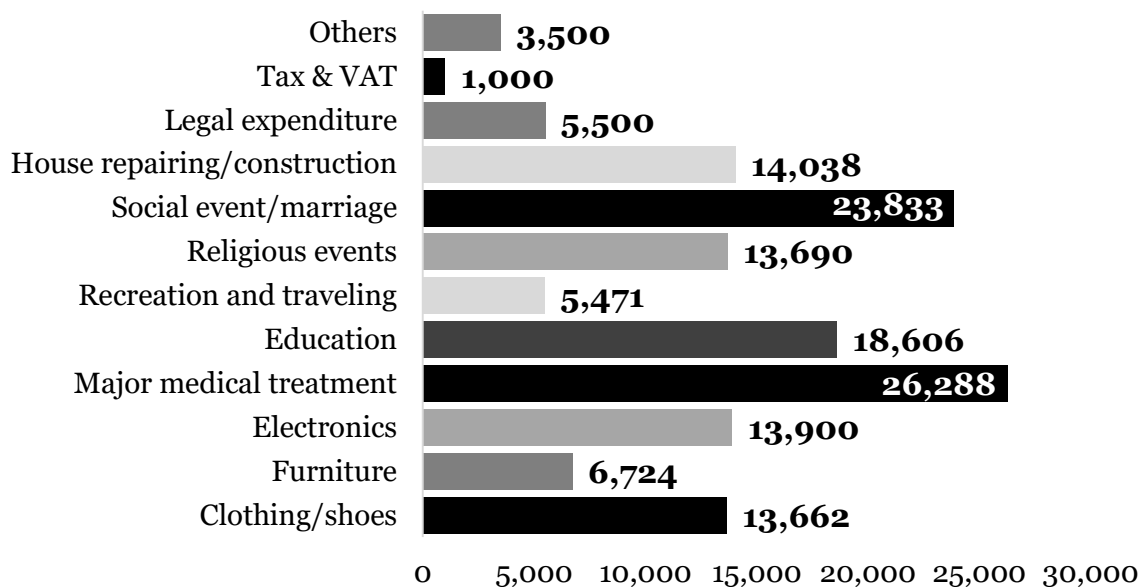
The Harijans annually spend a significant amount of money on their children's education, which is on average Taka 18,606. In a few districts, they spend Taka 40,000-50,000 for their children's admission fee, private coaching and other schooling fees. The Harijans pay an average of Taka 13,900 to buy electronics on yearly basis. On average, repairing houses cost them Taka 14,038 yearly.

Table 20: HH expenditure of last one year–2016-17 (in Taka)

Expenditure head	HH average
Clothing/shoes	13,661.59
Furniture	6,724.42
Electronics*	13,900
Major medical treatment	26,287.5
Education*	18,606.43
Recreation and traveling	5,470.53
Religious events	13,690.22
Social event/marriage	23,833.33
House repairing/construction	14,038.04
Legal expenditure*	5,500
Tax & VAT	1,000
Others	3,500
Total	128,482.87

*Electronics=TV, refrigerator, mobile set, etc; Education=Admission/session fee, donation, dress, private coaching etc; Legal expenditure=court, police, etc.

Expenditure of last one year (Taka)



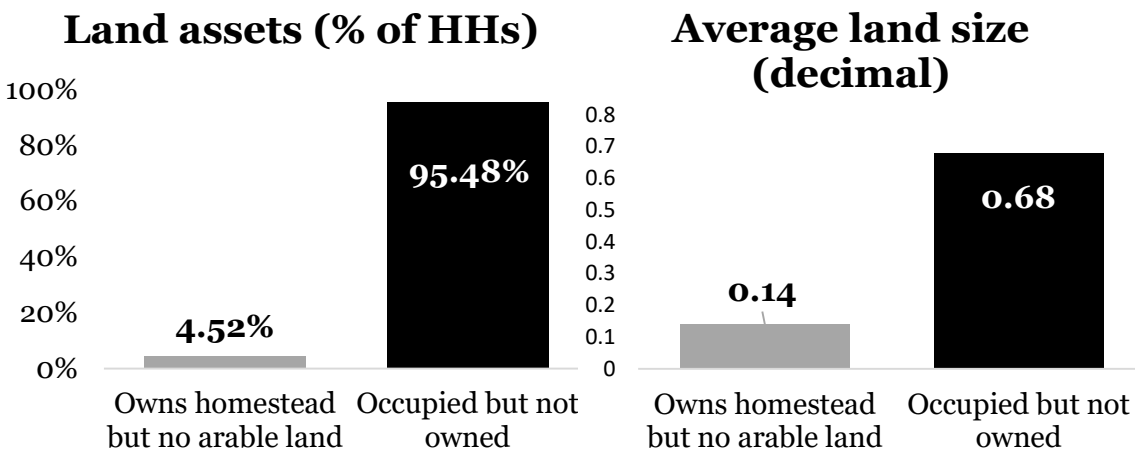
Land and Non-land Assets

Land ownership: The majority of the Harijans occupy the land on which their colonies or quarters are situated but they have no ownership of the land. It was found that 95.48% of the Harijan families do not own homestead or arable land. The average size of land they occupy is less than one decimal (0.68 decimal). However, half of the Harijan families in both Chattogram and Magura districts own their homestead. Overall only 4.52% families own their homestead with an average land size of 0.14 decimal. No one from the Harijan community owns crop land.

Table 21: Land assets (% of HHs)

Districts	Land status			
	Owns homestead but no arable land		Occupied but not owned	
	(% of HHs)	(in decimal)	(% of HHs)	(in decimal)
Dhaka	-	-	100	0.30
Narayanganj	-	-	100	0.40
Manikganj	-	-	100	0.28
Mymensingh	-	-	100	0.51
Jamalpur	-	-	100	0.50
Sherpur	-	-	100	0.51
Rajshahi	20	0.10	80	0.17
Chapai	-	-	100	15.00
Nawabganj	-	-	100	0.15
Natore	-	-	100	0.18
Bogura	-	-	100	0.18
Sirajganj	-	-	100	0.18
Pabna	-	-	100	0.19
Jhenaidah	-	-	100	0.18
Magura	50	0.22	50	0.28
Meherpur	-	-	100	0.86
Chuadanga	-	-	100	0.28
Kushtia	-	-	100	0.28
Faridpur	-	-	100	0.28
Rajbari	-	-	100	0.28
Barishal	-	-	100	0.32
Bagerhat	-	-	100	0.28
Khulna	-	-	100	0.27
Jashore	-	-	100	0.32
Brahmanbaria	-	-	100	0.18
Cumilla	-	-	100	0.32
Chandpur	-	-	100	0.32

Gazipur	-	-	100	0.34
Kishoreganj	-	-	100	0.28
Sylhet	3	2	97	0.37
Moulvibazar	10	2.29	90	0.41
Chattogram	52.5	0.77	47.5	0.17
Cox's Bazar	-	-	100	0.28
Nilphamari	-	-	100	0.22
Joypurhat	-	-	100	0.23
Dinajpur	-	-	100	0.23
Lalmonirhat	-	-	100	2.00
Gaibandha	-	-	100	1.13
Total	4.52	0.14	95.48	0.68



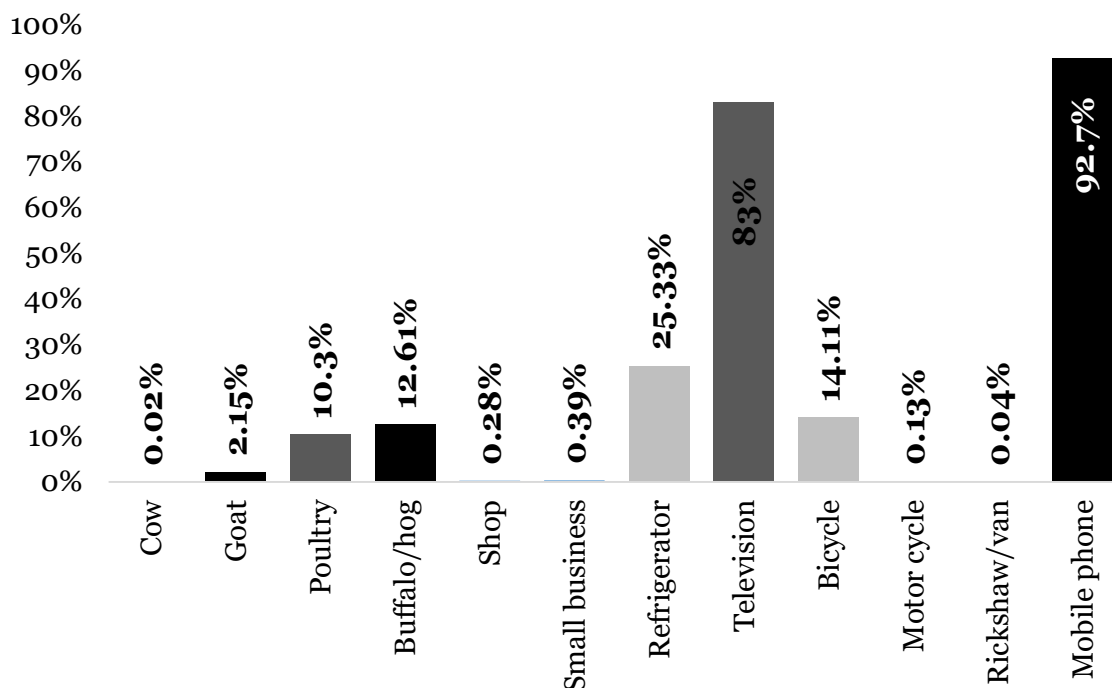
Ownership of non-land assets: The majority of the Harijan families own mobile phones (92.7%) and/or televisions (83%). Nearly 25% families own a refrigerator as well. Bicycle is the most common vehicle owned by the Harijan as 14.11% families owns a bicycle. In terms of ownership of domestic animals, nearly 13% of the families own a buffalo or a hog and 10% owns poultry. In the past, many of the Harijan families were involved in rearing hogs. A small percentage of Harijans owns shops or small businesses. Only a few families own a motorcycle, rickshaw or van. A small percentage of the families own a cow or a goat. None of the families own fishing boat or net.

Ownership of mobile phone and television is high among the Harijan community in most of the districts. All of the Harijan families own a bicycle, television and mobile phone in Faridpur district. There are several other districts where all Harijan families or more than 80% families own a television and a mobile phone. In several districts less than 10% of the Harijan families own a refrigerator. Ninety percent of the Harijan families in Jhenaidah and Dinajpur own a hog or a buffalo.

Table 22: Non-land assets

Non-land assets	% of HHs	Non-land assets	% of HHs
Mobile phone	92.70	Small business	0.39
Rickshaw/van	0.04	Shop	0.28
Motor cycle	0.13	Buffalo/hog	12.61
Bicycle	14.11	Poultry	10.3
Television	83	Goat	2.15
Refrigerator	25.33	Cow	0.02

Non-land assets (%)

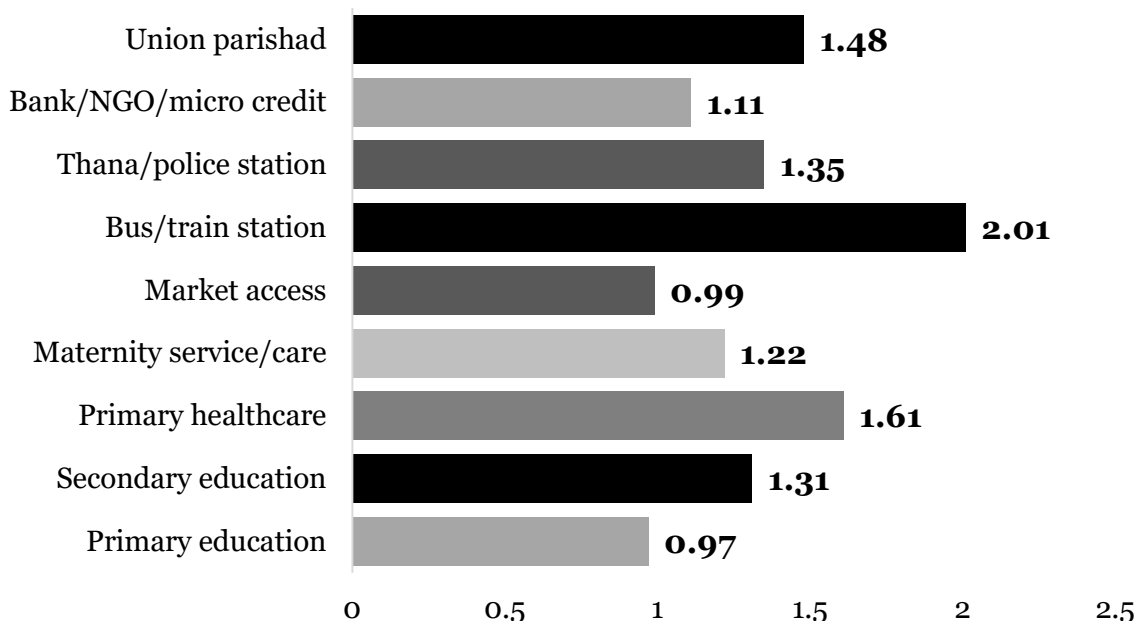


Distance to nearest facilities: The distance to different educational, health, communication and other facilities from a locality is a crucial factor that indicates the accessibility of those services. The nearest facility available to the Harijan families are primary schools, which are on average 0.99 kilometer away from the Harijan colonies. Bus and train stations are most far away from their colonies, which is 2.01 kilometers on average. The distance between their colonies and primary healthcare facilities like dispensaries is on average 1.61 kilometers.

Table 23: Distance of nearest facilities (km)

Facility	Average distance
Primary education	0.97
Secondary education	1.31
Primary healthcare	1.61
Maternity service/care	1.22
Market access	0.99
Bus/train station	2.01
Thana/police station	1.35
Bank/NGO/micro credit	1.11
Union parishad	1.48

Distance to nearest facilities (km)

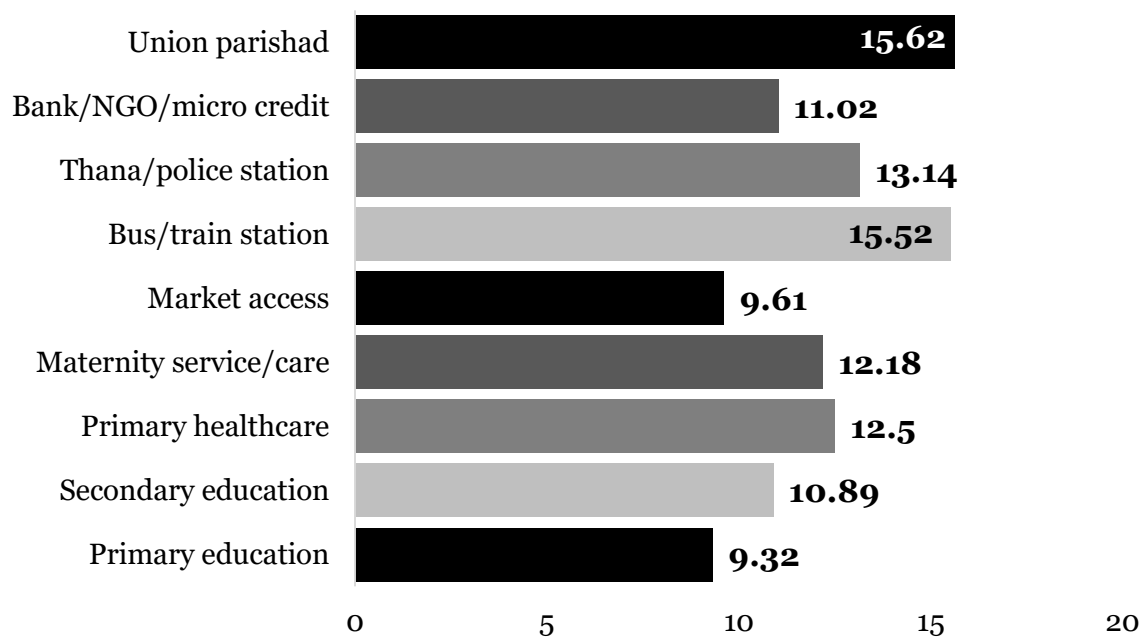


It takes the longest time to reach bus and train stations from the Harijan colonies, which is on average 15.52 minutes. Almost same time is needed to reach the union parishads from the colonies as well. However, it can take up to an hour or more to reach these facilities in Sylhet and Moulvibazar districts. On average, it takes 9.32 minutes to reach primary schools.

Table 24: Average time to reach (minute)

Facility	Average time
Primary education	9.32
Secondary education	10.89
Primary healthcare	12.50
Maternity service/care	12.18
Market access	9.61
Bus/train station	15.52
Thana/police station	13.14
Bank/NGO/micro credit	11.02
Union parishad	15.62

Average time to reach nearest facilities (minute)

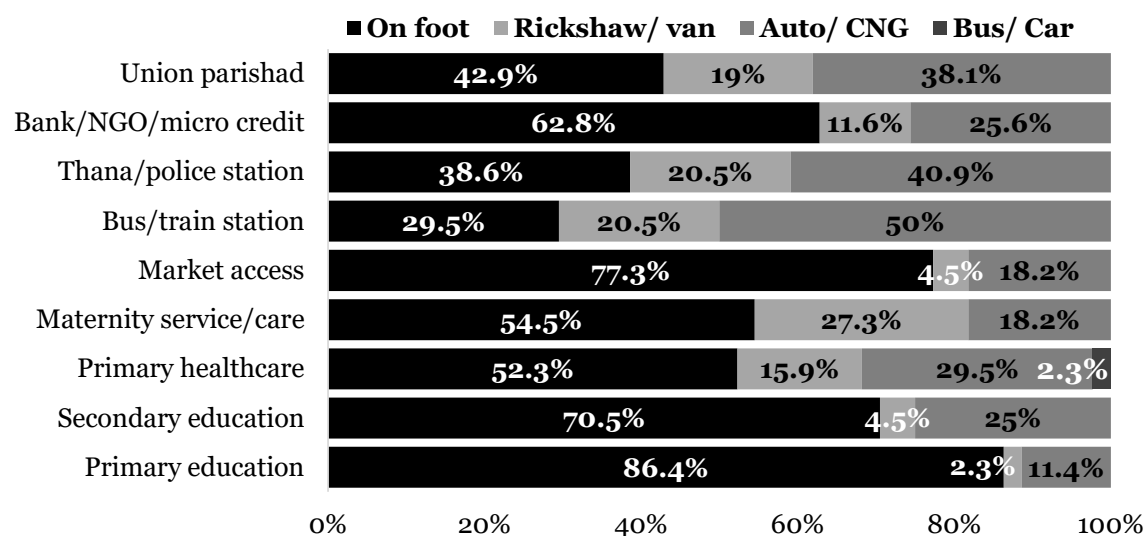


The highest percentage (57.3%) of the Harijans commute to different facilities on foot. The majority of the Harijan students go to primary (86%) or secondary school (70%) on foot. Half of the Harijan community reach bus or train stations by auto or CNG. They travel more by auto or CNG than rickshaws or vans. Almost no one from the Harijan community travel by bus or car to access services.

Table 25: Mode of communication to access services (% of the community)

Name of service	Mode of communication			
	On foot	Rickshaw/van	Auto/CNG	Bus/car
Primary education	86.4	2.3	11.4	-
Secondary education	70.5	4.5	25.0	-
Primary healthcare	52.3	15.9	29.5	2.3
Maternity service/care	54.5	27.3	18.2	-
Market access	77.3	4.5	18.2	-
Bus/train station	29.5	20.5	50.0	-
Thana/police station	38.6	20.5	40.9	-
Bank/NGO/micro credit	62.8	11.6	25.6	-
Union parishad	42.9	19.0	38.1	-
Total	57.3	14.0	28.5	0.3

Mode of communication to access services



Economic Condition

The majority of the Harijans are in debt. In fact, 78.13% Harijan families are in debt on average. More than 80% or even 100% of the Harijan families in some of the districts are in debt. The Harijan families in Sylhet and Jamalpur were found to be least in debt (30%). Around 38% of the Harijan families are in debt in Dhaka district. On the other hand, 27% families have savings and around 16% families have bank accounts on average. Overall, 36.67% of the Harijan families use bKash or mobile banking.

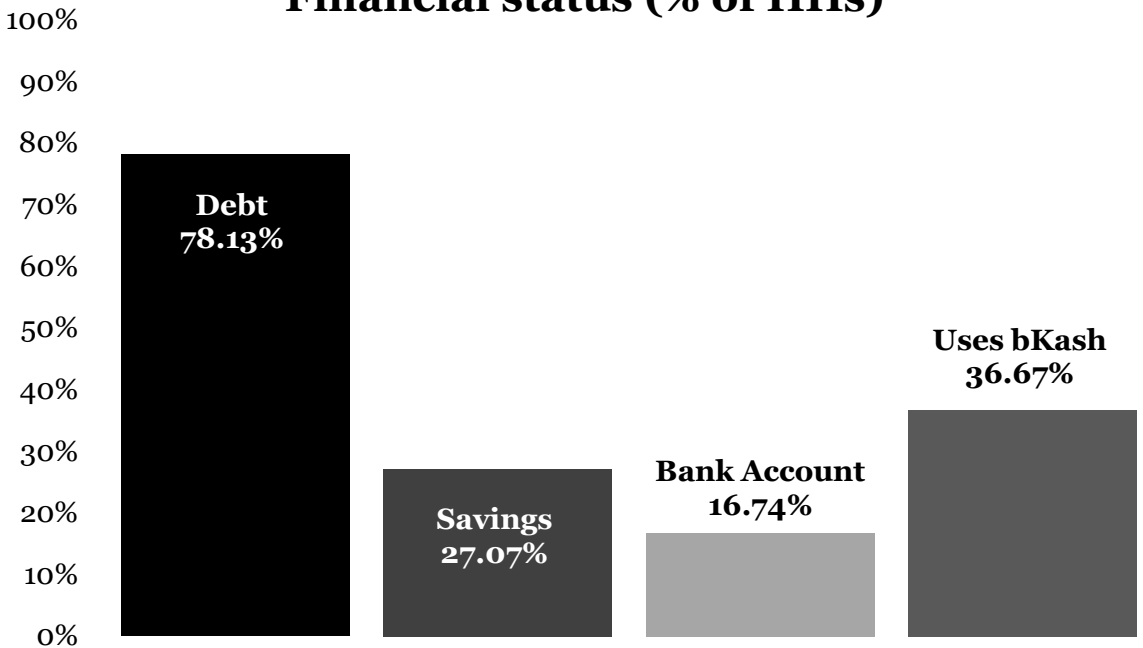
Table 26: Financial status

Types	% of HHs
Debt	78.13
Savings	27.07
Bank account	16.74
Uses bKash (mobile banking)	36.67



Photo: Saydur Rahman

Financial status (% of HHs)



The average amount of debt of a Harijan family is Taka 29,826. In several districts, the amount of debt is Taka 50,000 or higher as it is in Narayanganj district (Taka 105,000). On the other hand, average savings of a Harijan family is a meagre Taka 4,402 and they have an average of Taka 5,786 in their bank accounts. In majority of the districts, their savings is less Taka 1,000.

Table 27: Average amount of debt, savings and bank balance

Types	Taka
Debt	29,826.09
Savings	4,402.61
Bank balance	5,786.96

Average debt, savings and bank account (in Taka)



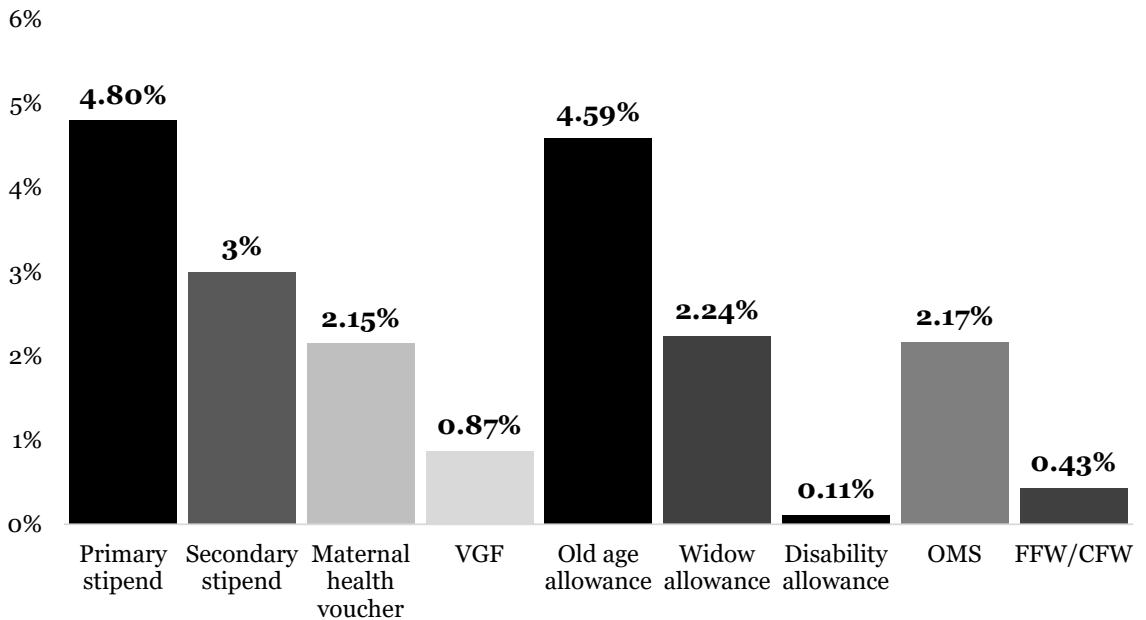
Access to Safety Net Programmes

Some Harijan families have access to old age allowance, widow allowance, primary education stipend and secondary education stipend. However, only 0.85% of the Harijan families depend on Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) to meet their monthly expenditure. On average, 4.6% Harijan families receive old age allowance and 4.8% families receive primary education stipend. All the Harijan families in Nilphamari district are included in the Open Market Sales (OMS) programme. A tiny percentage of Harijans have access to Food for Work (FFW) or Cash for Work (CFW). No Harijan family is included in the freedom fighters allowance, Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Gratuitous Relief (GR) and Employment Generation Program for the Poorest (EGPP).

Table 28: Access to Safety Net Programmes

SSNPs	% of HHs
FFW/CFW	0.43
OMS	2.17
Disability Allowance	0.11
Widow Allowance	2.24
Old age allowance	4.59
VGF	0.87
Maternal health voucher	2.15
Secondary stipend	3
Primary stipend	4.80

Access to social safety net programmes



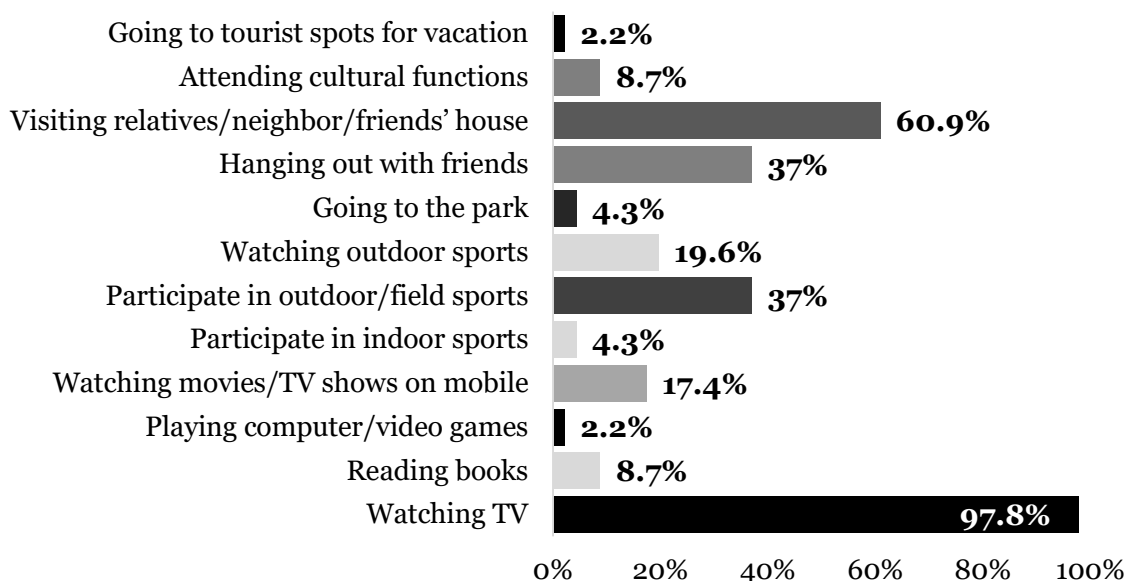
Recreation

Nearly all of the Harijan families watch television for recreation (98%). Also, 60.9% of the families visit their relatives, neighbors or friends' houses in their leisure time and 37% families participate in outdoor or playground sports as well as hang-out with their friends. Only 8.7% read books as a form of recreation.

Table 29: Recreation (multiple response)

Types of recreation	% of HHs
Watching TV	97.8
Reading books	8.7
Playing computer/video games	2.2
Watching movies/TV shows on mobile	17.4
Participate in indoor sports	4.3
Participate in outdoor/field sports	37.0
Watching outdoor sports	19.6
Going to the park	4.3
Hanging out with friends	37.0
Visiting relative/neighbor/friends' house	60.9
Attending cultural functions	8.7
Going to tourist spots for vacation	2.2

Types of recreation (% of HHs)





A Harijan of Miron Jillah Harijan City Colony shows his rare photo with the president of Bangladesh. He questions when the promises the president, prime minister and politicians make to improve their life will be fulfilled.

Social Capital, Changes and Aspirations

Harijan Culture

The majority of the Harijan community are referred as Harijan (84.8%) and 15% of them are referred as 'sweeper'. Bangalees also call them *methar* (a derogatory term for garbage collectors), Domar or Dom, Bashfore or Hela, Rorit or Jamader, Kanpuri and Balmiki. Among these, Dom, Domar, Bashfore, Hela and Balmiki are the names of the *gotros* (sub-groups) among the Harijan community. The Harijans are followers of Hinduism and all the families celebrate *Durga Puja*, *Kali Puja*, *Saraswati Puja* and *Holi*. Nearly 70% of the community also celebrate *Chhath Puja*, *Surja Puja*, *Dol Jatra* or *Dol Puja*, *Shiv Puja*, *Kartini* and *Dipali* among other Hindu festivals.

Most of the Harijans identified singing or both singing and dancing as their special skills (72%). Nearly half of the community responded that they can play *tabla* (a pair of traditional drums played with hand), *dhol* (drum), harmonium, guitar and flute. Some of them also paint, play sports, know how to drive or make bamboo handicrafts. The respondents stated that they are a culture-minded people.

The different sub-groups among the Harijans have their own unique culture, rituals and languages including Hindi, Bhojpuri, Tamil and Bangla (RIB 2006). No reliable study was found to verify the exact number of sub-groups among the Harijans and the different languages they speak.

Community-based Organizations and Political Participation

Bangladesh Horijan Yokkho Parishad is an organization of the Harijans who work to achieve their economic, social and political rights. Established in 1996, they have one central committee, 54 zila or district committees, 30 upazila committees as well as a general body and advisory board. Nearly one third of the community are members of this organization. They are dedicated to the wellbeing of their community, fighting against all kinds of discrimination and leading the movement of the Harijans to establish their rights.

Nearly 21% of the Harijan community are members of the *puja* committee, which arranges and manages different religious programmes. Some other committees of the Harijans are *Samaj Committee or Samaj Sheba Shongho* (social welfare association), Youth club or youth welfare club, *Bashfor Shamajik Shongho or Railway Harijan Oikkyatan Club* (organizations of Bashfors and Harijan who work in railways), *11 Gram Dom/Raut/Hela Samaj/Panchayet Committee*, Jamalpur Bashfor Committee, Harijan Women Society Association and *Alor Pothay Coaching Centre*.

These organizations play a role in capacity building of the community by resolving social and family-related conflicts, creating a platform for the youth, organizing sports events, contributing to social development, ensuring the security of the community, establishing the rights of the Harijan women and improving the education system. Nearly all of the community clusters (98%) have Harijan voters and 2.1% of the clusters include Harijan individuals who have participated in local elections as male and/or female candidates.

Recent Changes in the Community

For this study, several dimensions were considered in order to identify the recent changes that occurred in the Harijan community including occupation, education, migration, social status, communication and change in title. Nearly 95% of the community believe that the changes have been positive. The major positive change in the Harijan community is increase in education rate. Communication facilities have also developed vastly after development of roads and increase in mobile and Internet usage. Development of roads and increase in mobile and Internet usage are two of the major changes, which contributed to positive changes. In 75% of the community clusters,

shifting to new convenient occupations has been a major recent change. Social outlook has changed and discrimination against them has become less severe than before. Nearly 28% of the community clusters stated that migration outside the colonies has occurred. Harijans changed their last names or family titles to shift to a new occupation in 7.7% of the community clusters.

Table 30: Nature of changes (% of the community)

Dimensions	Nature of change	Type of change >20% Major change <20% Minor change
Occupation	Shifting to new convenient occupation Increase in education rate No change/Not applicable	Major (75%) Minor (3.1%) Major (21.9%)
Education	Increase in education rate	Major (100%)
Migration	No change/Not applicable Outward migration	Major (66.7%) Major (27.8%)
Social Status	Development of roads and increase in mobile/Internet usage	Minor (5.6%)
	Development in social outlook/ Decrease in discrimination	Major (79.4%)
	No change/Not applicable	Minor (17.6%)
Communication	Development of roads and increase in mobile/Internet usage	Major (97.7%)
	Narrow and muddy roads	Minor (2.3%)
Title Change	No change/Not applicable	Major (92.3%)
	Shifting to new convenient occupation	Minor (7.7%)

Problem Analysis

Habitation and land-related problems: The Harijans have been living in the same colonies or quarters since the British rulers brought them. They occupy the land on which their colonies or quarters are situated but they have no ownership of the land. The majority of them do not have the capacity to buy land. Even those who can afford to buy land are unable to do so because of social stigma. It was found that 95.48% of the Harijan families in the country do not own homestead or arable land. The average size of the land they occupy is 0.68 decimal. In 70% of the community clusters, the main cause of their habitation and land-related problems is landlessness. Moreover, they are evicted from the

colonies if a Harijan quits working as a cleaner and shifts to another job.

Furthermore, on average the Harijan families live in 154 square feet houses, which usually consists of one or two tiny rooms. In some districts, their house size is even less than 100 square feet. The respondents identified overpopulation and their meagre income as the other two problems regarding their housing condition. Overpopulation, unplanned constructions of colonies and lack of government initiative for expansion of the colonies contribute to their inhumane living conditions.

Low education rate: Half of the Harijan population above 18 years old are either illiterate or has letter knowledge only. Less than 22% of the Harijan population has completed primary and secondary education. Less than 2% of the Harijans have completed graduation and Master's education. Often young Harijans who are educated are forced to become cleaners either to maintain their residency in the colony or because they could not secure another job after their identity was revealed.

Latrine facilities: The quality of latrine facilities in the 'sweeper' colonies and quarters is extremely poor. As mentioned in earlier, a shocking 71.04% of the Harijan families have to share a toilet in the colonies with five and more families. All the Harijan families in some districts have to share toilets the same way. In Dhaka, 76.67% Harijan families have to share toilets with many other people. They have to stand in a long lines every morning to use the toilets in the colonies.

Poor infrastructure: Nearly 90% of the community responded that there is no proper drainage system in the colonies. Either the drains are too small or there is no drainage system at all. They also said that the pathways and roads are narrow and muddy.

Decreasing employment opportunities: The government reserved 80% quota for the Harijans in all recruitments for cleaners in the municipalities and city corporations of the country. However, in reality this policy is not implemented. In half of the community clusters from 37 districts, the participants stated that Bangalees are taking away their jobs. In fact, Harijans make up less than 40% of the cleaning staff employed by the Dhaka City Corporation (Ariquzzaman 2014).

People from the majority Hindu and Muslim population are now willing to work as cleaners—a job they were reluctant to do before the modernization of sanitation system. Therefore the job opportunity as cleaners is shrinking at an alarming rate for the traditional 'sweepers'. It is also very difficult for the educated Harijans to enter into new jobs because of their identity. They are usually employed in other jobs if they change their last names and hide their ancestral roots. Corruption, bribery and preference of Bangalees over Harijans in recruitment of cleaners greatly affects the livelihood of the Harijans.

Discrimination in employment: There are different pay scales for the cleaning staff in different city corporations and municipalities, which creates grounds for exploitation of the extreme poor Harijans in the less developed districts of the country. According to the findings of the study, their monthly income ranges from Taka 1,020 to Taka 20,000 in different districts. In 72% of the community clusters, the FGD participants responded that their income is meagre. It is reported that the wage of Harijan *jharudar* or sweepers is shockingly low in some municipalities such as Jashore where the daily pay was as low as Taka 37 until recently (as of 2019 the lowest wages in Jashore was Taka 50).

The city corporations and municipalities also do not provide any permanent employment letter to the Harijans and they can be terminated at any time on whim. They are also not provided any pension even after working as government employees for their entire lives. Moreover, in order to live in the 'sweeper' colony or quarter, one is obliged to work as a cleaner. Otherwise he or she and their families face eviction.

Furthermore, often Harijans are paid less than the Bangalee cleaners. There are even reported cases where a Bangalee and a Harijan are recruited for one cleaner position only for the Harijan to do all the work of cleaning whereas the Bangalee takes the major share of the salary. Lack of a fixed pay scale for all cleaners, including Harijans and Bangalees and mismanagement are serious setbacks for the community.

Social discrimination: Social discrimination against the Harijans is still prevalent and a serious issue in more than half of the community clusters under the study. The Harijans are often referred as *methor* or 'sweeper' to belittle and disrespect their occupation of cleaning garbage and dirt. In the past, they were not even allowed to walk in front of restaurants. It is reported from different parts of the country that the Harijans are not allowed to sit with Bangalees in restaurants and offered food and drinks in the separate plates and glasses that will not be used by others. Even in schools, the Harijan students face discrimination. There are incidents where the school authority uses the Harijan students to clean the school toilets and the Bangalee teachers and students refer to them in a degrading manner. Such extreme discrimination does not occur in Dhaka and other city corporations but it is not uncommon in the less developed municipalities. As mentioned before, they also face discrimination in their traditional occupation of working as cleaners.

Deprived of government facilities including social protection: The Harijans, an excluded community, is deprived of many government facilities including social protection and loans, which are designed to reduce extreme poverty of the most vulnerable people of the society. The Harijans are given a preference in the Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) of the country on paper but in most places it has not been implemented. So far a small percentage of Harijan families have access to the safety net programmes and only 0.85% of the Harijan families can depend on Social Safety Net

Programs (SSNPs) to meet their monthly expenditure. Moreover, the study found that they have no opportunity to access government loans in all of the community clusters.

Fuel and water crisis: There is no pipeline gas connection in the colonies and quarters where the Harijans live. All of the FGD participants stated that they face fuel crisis. As mentioned earlier, the Harijan families have to buy firewood, kerosene or cylinder gas as an alternative to pipeline gas. In 36.7% of the community clusters, there is a lack of access to drinking water or they have to buy water from outside the colony.

Religious and social event-related problems: The Harijans face problems in arranging social events in all of the community clusters under the study because the community centres are not rented to them and there is also no separate space for them where they can celebrate social and religious events like wedding, funeral and *pujas*. All of the clusters also reported that they do not have separate religious institutions.

Possible Solutions to the Problems

The FGD participants stated that initiatives in favour of the Harijans taken by the municipalities and city corporations are the solutions to most of the problems mentioned above. Regarding their acute habitation-related problems, relocation of their colonies was suggested as the most effective solution to the problem. The Harijans also demand that their colonies be expanded because overpopulation in the colonies is a serious concern. In the case of access to safety net programmes and loans, initiatives by the government was identified as the only solution to the problem. A fixed pay scale for cleaners in all city corporations and municipalities is required. Initiatives by government and non-government organizations and influential people of the society was suggested as the main solution to their employment-related problems. Social acceptance and initiatives by the government are necessary for the better employment of the educated youth. Change in social outlook about the Harijans and improving quality of education for the Harijans have been identified as the solutions to many of their problems.

Needs and Aspirations

Rehabilitation and renovation: One of the most crucial demands of the Harijans is their rehabilitation from colonies and quarters or reconstruction, which have not been expanded or renovated since the British era. Over the years, the Harijan population has increased but the size of the colonies has not. A family consisting of six members on average lives in one small house. Moreover, they are not granted the ownership of the land on which they have lived for generations. Their primary need is proper housing. They demand that the colonies be expanded or the inhabitants be relocated to a better location.

Generation of employment opportunities and financial solvency: Another main need of the Harijans is to have new and permanent employment opportunities and achieving financial solvency. They also want permanent employment in city corporations and municipalities and better pay-scale for those who work as cleaners. They also want implementation of 80% quota dedicated for the Harijans in recruitment of cleaners.

Increasing educational facilities: Access to better educational facilities is crucial for the Harijans to escape poverty and change traditional occupation. The percentage of Harijans in higher education is still extremely low, which is a major obstacle for the youth to change their traditional occupation of cleaning.

Increasing the quality of latrine facilities: Access to hygienic and good quality latrines is a big concern for the Harijans since overuse of the toilets in the overpopulated colonies is a serious problem. Therefore access to better toilet facilities is a major need of the Harijans.

Other needs: Access to safety net programmes and government loans is essential for the marginal communities. They also need better access to pure drinking water as well as access to pipeline gas connection in their colonies and quarters. The roads and drains inside the colonies also need to be renovated and developed. The Harijans stated that their needs can be met mainly by the government and related organizations. Non-government, donor organizations and the influential individuals can also contribute to meet their needs to some extent.

References

Akhtaruzzaman, Dewan Huq, A.S.M. Tofazzel and Bashfor, Panna Laal. *Poverty Alleviation and Empowerment Strategy of the HORIJON community*. (2006). Published by Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB).

Ariquzzaman, Shudepto. (2014). *Untouchable Hearts*. Published in the Weekend Tribune.

Asaduzzaman, A. (2001). *The 'Pariah' People – An Ethnography of the Urban Sweepers in Bangladesh*. Published by The University Press Limited.

Consultations with Bangladesh Horijan Yokkho Parishad.

Preliminary Report on Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016. October 2017. Published by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Statistical Yearbook Bangladesh 2013. December 2014. Published by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Life in Harijan Colonies



Jashore Harijan colony.



Harijan woman in
Jashore Harijan colony.



Typical walkway inside Miron Jillah Harijan City Colony, the largest Harijan colony in Bangladesh.

Harijans of Bangladesh

The Harijans are an occupational group or community who are considered as the fifth category outside four Varnas in the Hindu Casteism. They had been brought to their current locations from different parts of India during the British colonial rule. They traditionally work as ‘sweepers’ or cleaners under the city corporations and municipalities of Bangladesh. To date the Harijans face severe social discrimination and many treat them as ‘untouchables’. They are often termed as *methor* to belittle and disrespect their occupation of cleaning garbage and dirt. On top of social discrimination, they face severe economic exploitation. Even the young educated Harijans cannot enter new occupations because of their identity.

This monograph presents findings of a study of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) on demographic and socio-economic conditions of the community, which is a valuable addition to the academic and public discourse on social exclusion of the Harijans in Bangladesh.



ISBN: 978-984-94339-6-5

Price: Tk.100 US\$5

