

## **Status of living of Rickshaw Pullers in Malda town of West Bengal**

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of the study is to analyze the socio-economic condition of rickshaw pullers in Malda town of West Bengal. The study is based on the primary sources of data collected through field survey 2012-13. Rickshaw pullers are those people who drive the rickshaws on the roads, lanes, bi-lanes, transporting people and commodities. These rickshaw pullers help in linkage process through its well networking system in Malda town. Rickshaw pullers are one of the poorest of the poor in the society. It is the most important source of earning for those people who are not working in the formal sectors. The reasons which forced them to pulled rickshaw are unemployment, poverty, low income, low educational status and large family size. Rickshaw pulling activity is an important occupation of the informal sector, where a million of poor not only serve the transportation needs of the society but also try to meet out their own economic and employment needs.

**Keywords:** 1. Rickshaw pullers, 2. Informal sector, 3. Society, 4. Income and unemployment.

### **Introduction**

“A person who is employed himself in pulling of rickshaws for getting their means of livelihood is called as rickshaw puller.” At the present stage of India’s development rickshaws remain a prevalent mode of transport in the urban and sub urban areas. Rickshaw pullers serve the society through various ways such as: by carrying our loads, take the people to their destination places, help in saving the national income and environmental deterioration, as rickshaws are pollution free transport vehicle and moving without fuels, like petrol & diesel, economically viable even for the poor. Workers in the informal economy are not different in any way than the other workers except that they perform their work in unregulated and unprotected conditions. The vast majority of the India’s workforce is employed in what is often called the ‘informal’ sector, Workers generally included in the informal sector are, the urban poor, migrant from rural areas, persons with low educational skill level, young school learners entering the labour market for which the informal sector offers the only source of employment and income. The hard work done by rickshaw-puller doesn’t match the money they get for it. Most of the times people try to pay him less and it often creates dispute among the passenger and the rickshaw-puller. With this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze the living conditions, working conditions and health aspects of rickshaw pullers in Malda town of West Bengal.

Mushir Ali (2013) analysed the socio-economic conditions of rickshaw pullers of Uttar Pradesh and found that they mainly belonged to backward castes and their conditions were more miserable than that of schedule caste people. Various studies show that most of the rickshaw pullers also tried to save their money although they have imperfect money storing arrangements. Mani Arul Nandhi (2011) analyzed that despite their mobile lifestyle and unstable earnings, migrant rickshaw pullers are potentially

bankable. This is evident from the savings that they regularly accumulate. There is an urgent need to the government's attention to improve the socio-economic conditions of hand rickshaw pullers. Swapan Ganguly (1982) asked for the government's immediate attention in order to prevent further unemployment in the absence of plans, to ensure the rights of hand rickshaw-pullers as citizens, such as their registration, provision of auto rickshaws etc. If rickshaw pullers are provided access to adequate financing, social security and better designed vehicles, then they will have the ability to own their assets and transform themselves into dignified human beings. The present study reveals the delapidated condition of the rickshaw pullers of Malda town of West Bengal. They are facing the constant struggle and competition among the rickshaw pullers from early morning to evening. Proper education facilities not even available for their children which results into various diseases such as juvenile delinquency, malnutrition etc.

**AIMS and objectives of the study:**

1. To study and analyze the socio-economic condition of rickshaw pullers.
2. To find out the reasons and factors which compelled them to pull rickshaws.
3. To highlight the working life and the problems faced by the rickshaw pullers at their work place.
4. To explain the implication arising out of this occupation on rickshaw pullers.
5. To examine the living condition by analyzing their housing condition, income status etc.
6. To know the migratory status of the rickshaw pullers.
7. To determine the monthly average income of the rickshaw pullers.
8. To suggest remedial measures for their betterment based upon observation and suggestion of the rickshaw pullers.

**Study area**

Malda Town of Malda district is better known as the "Mango City", is a city and municipality in Malda district in the state of West Bengal. It serves as the district headquarters. It is located on the western banks of the river Mahananda river. It is the sixth largest city in West Bengal. For the present study Malda Town of the state of West Bengal has been taken which lies between latitudinal and longitudinal figures of 25° 00'N and 88° 09'E to 88°15'E respectively. As of the 2011 census, Malda town municipality had a population of 216,083 and the urban agglomeration had a population of 324,237. The municipality had a sex ratio of 877 females per 1,000 males. The literacy rate of Malda town was 84.69%, where male literacy was 85.44% and female literacy was 83.86% (Census, 2011).

**Database and methodology**

The present work is based on empirical study; it examines the socio-economic condition of the rickshaw pullers. Respondents have been selected from the different location of the town. The survey was carried out during the months of April and May, 2013. Data was collected through interview schedule. For this 100 rickshaw pullers were interviewed in the different parts of the town. After collection of data, for the purpose of data analysis the frequencies of the responses of the rickshaw pullers were conducted and percentages were calculated through simple statistical methods. After that the data were converted into tabular form. With the help of these tables the statistical diagrams have been drawn.

**Socio-Economic profile of rickshaw pullers:**

The present study involves an analysis of some basic information regarding the social, economic as well as the educational condition of the Rickshaw pullers of Malda town. The sample consists of 100 rickshaw pullers. It also involves the problems which are facing by them and provide some measures of regarding their problems.

**Age-Structure of the rickshaw pullers**

The table 1 reveals that rickshaw pullers have been classified into six categories on the basis of age groups. This table shows that 6 per cent of the rickshaw pullers lie below the age-group of 15 years, whereas 22 per cent of the rickshaw pullers fall in the category of 15-25 years, 24 per cent and 23 per cent respondent fall in the category of 25-35 years and 35-45 years respectively. These two groups show the highest percentage of rickshaw pullers and are efficient in performing physical work. On the other hand 18 per cent and 7 per cent of the rickshaw pullers falls in the age-group of 45-55 years and more than 50 years respectively, whereas only 7% rickshaw pullers belongs to the category of above 55 years.

**Table: 1 age-Structure of the rickshaw puller**

<b>Age-Group</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<15	6
15-25	22
25-35	24
35-45	23
45-55	18
>55	7
TOTAL	100

**Source:** Based on field survey 2013

**Religion of the rickshaw pullers**

The table clearly shows that out of 100 samples we find that Hindus dominated in the Malda town in pulling of rickshaws which constitutes of 62.7 per cent while Muslims constitutes of 37.3 per cent in Malda town.

**Table: 2 Religions of rickshaw pullers**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Hindu	62.7
Muslim	37.3

**Source:** Based on field survey 2013

**Educational status of the rickshaw pullers**

Education determines the quality of life and the socio-economic development of society depends upon educational status of the society. It shaping the right kind of lifestyle and qualitative behaviour needs to uphold. By the survey it is found that only 36 per cent of the rickshaw pullers were literate and remaining 64 per cent are illiterate. It clearly indicates that more than half of the rickshaw pullers are illiterate.

**Table: 3 educational statuses of the rickshaw pullers**

<b>Literacy status</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Literate	36
Illirataate	64

**Source:** Based on field survey 2013

**Possession of house by the rickshaw pullers**

House is one of the basic needs of the life of the human beings for better living and security. But due to poverty many of the poor people who come to urban areas in search of jobs who can't possess their own house, either they live in rental houses or some are living on footpaths while other are living in slums, garage and jhuggis

**Table: 4 possession of house by the rickshaw pullers**

<b>Status of house</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Own	46
Rented	38
Slum	12
Foothpath and other	4
Total	100

Source: based on field survey 2013

The above table reveals that 46 per cent of rickshaw pullers have their own house, 38 per cent of them live in rented house, 12 per cent live in slums and the remaining of them live either in footpath or in garage.

**Housing condition of the rickshaw pullers**

Everybody wants to live in their own shelter, while the condition of houses is directly related with the socio-economic condition of the people. Status of the house is depending upon the income and the variation in the income leading to variation in the types of houses. Therefore the condition of houses is directly related with the socio-economic condition of the people. The table reveals that 25.4 per cent of rickshaw pullers living in pucca houses, 35.6 per cent are living in semi pucca houses, 20.2 and 18.8 per cent living in the kuchcha houses and jhuggis.

**Table:5 Housing condition of the rickshaw pullers**

<b>Housing condition</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pucca	25.4
Semi pucca	35.6
Kuchcha	20.2
Jhuggis	18.8

Source: based on field survey 2013

**Drinking water facility**

The table reveals that in the study area 90 per cent rickshaw pullers are getting water from municipal taps and 7 per cent from hand pumps. Only 3 per cent of them are having motor facility.

**Table: 6 Drinking water facility**

<b>Drinking Water</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Municipal taps	90
Hand pumps	7
Motor	3

Source: based on field survey 2013

**Marrital status**

Marriage is an important occasion of life mainly established for satisfaction of biological, social and cultural needs of the human beings. Although its definition varies from religion to religion, but the fundamental purpose remain the same. The table reveals that 65.2 per cent of the rickshaw pullers are married and are living with their spouse whereas 34.8 per cent are still unmarried. Majority of married rickshaw pullers are doing this work due to their large family size. The widows are engaged mainly because of their children and their livelihood.

**Table: 7 marital status of the rickshaw puLLERS**

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	65.2
Unmarried	34.8
Total	100

Source: based on field survey 2013

**Migratory status**

Migration determines the density pf population in an area. It plays an important role in the population growth of an urban area. People are generally migrated for getting better way of living towards the urban centres.The given table shows the migratory status of the rickshaw pullers. Around 55% of rickshaw pullers have migrated from neighbouring states and districts, while 46% belongs to the same city. Rickshaw pullers are migrated here because of poverty and low income, unemployment, debt, small size of holding, family disintegration and orphanage.

**Table: 8 Migratory status of the rickshaw pullers**

<b>Migratory status</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Migrant	55
Non-migrant	45

Source: Based on field survey 2013

**Sources of energy for cooking purpose**

For cooking food there are different sources of energy which is used by people. It includes fuel woods, cow dungs, leaves, L.P.G, kerosene etc. But most of the poor people are using fuel wood and cow dung as it is cheap and easily available. The following table makes us clear that about

**Table: 9 Sources of energy for cooking purpose**

<b>Sources of energy</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fuel wood	26
Cow dung	40
Leaves	24
L.p.g	4
Kerosene	6

Source: based on field survey 2013

The following table makes us clear that 40 per cent and 26 per cent of the rickshaw puller using cow dung and fuel wood for the cooking purpose respectively. 24 per cent of them used leaves as a source of energy

for their cooking purpose. Only 4 per cent and 6 per cent of rickshaw pullers used L.P.G and kerosene respectively.

**Monthly income of the rickshaw pullers**

Monthly income usually depends upon the various factors such as nature of jobs, skilled and unskilled person, duration of working hours etc. The table reveals that 9 per cent rickshaw pullers are earning below 1500 Rs. monthly, as because most of them are old while 29 per cent and 37 per cent are earning 1500-2500 and 2500-3500 Rs. monthly. Remaining 17 per cent and 8 per cent are earning 3500-4500 and above 4500 Rs per month respectively, who are quite strong physically.

**Table: 10 monthly income of the rickshaw pullers**

Monthly income	Percentage
<1500	9
1500-2500	29
2500-3500	37
3500-4500	17
>4500	8

Source: based on field survey 2013

**Family size of the rickshaw pullers**

Family size of the society determines the quality of life of the people. If the family size is large, having low income, as a result, they can not afford good shelter, education and other opportunities to their dependents. On the contrary, small family gets better lifestyle. Therefore burden if the family compelled the members of the family to do such jobs which get quick returns like pulling of rickshaws.

**Table:11 Family size of the rickshaw pullers**

NO. Of members	Percentage
<3	11
3-5	36
6-8	43
>8	10
TOTAL	100

Source: Based on field survey 2013

After analysing the data we find that 11per cent of the respondents have less than 3 members in the family, while 36 per cent have members between 3 to 5 and 43per cent of respondents have members between 6 - 8. The remaining 10 per cent have more than 8 members. It is clear from the data that highest percentage of family size of the rickshaw pullers is found between 6 - 8 members.

**Causes forced for rickshaw pulling**

Rickshaw pullers has been asked about the reasons which forced them to rickshaw pulling and it is found that poverty constitute about 14.44 per cent, low income 4.44 per cent, unemployment 12.78 per cent, family burden 36.68 per cent, unskilled 18.33 per cent, uneducated 11.11 per cent and remaining 2.22 per cent by small land holding.

**Table: 12 Causes forced for rickshaw pulling**

Reasons	Percentage
Poverty	14.44
Low income	4.44
Unemployment	12.78
Family burden	36.68
Unskilled	18.33
Uneducated	11.11
Small land holdings	2.22
Total	100

Source: based on field survey 2013

### **Infrastructural facilities avail by the rickshaw pullers**

The infrastructural facilities and amenities are required by each person for a better living. It includes T.V., radio, cycle, mobile, C.D. player etc.

**Table: 13 Infrastructural facilities avail by the rickshaw pullers**

Infrastructural facilities	Percentage
T.v	14
Radio	32
Cycle	30
Mobile	15
C.d player	9
Total	100

Source: based on field survey 2013

The above table reveals that infrastructural facilities were possessed by the rickshaw pullers were 14 per cent and 32 per cent having T.V. and radio respectively, while 30 per cent and 15 per cent of them having cycle and mobile respectively and 9% rickshaw pullers possess C.D. plater. It is foybd that deep rooted poverty has bound these poor people to enjoy all the infrastructural facilities. Their whole life is spend in striving hard to get a square meal rather taking the infrastructural facilities is a luxury which they wish to acquire.

### **Diseases faced by the rickshaw pullers**

Health is an important indicator of quality of life. As their work are more physical, therefore 13 per cent of rickshaw pullers are suffered from chest pain, 2 per cent from back pain, 4 per cent from joint pain, 4 per cent from T.B., 6 per cent from Asthma, 4 per cent are suffering by coughing and cold, while remaining 67 per cent of them are free from any diseases.

**Table: 14 diseases faced by the rickshaw pullers**

Diseases	Percentage
Back pain	2
Joint pain	4
Chest pain	13

T.b.	4
Asthma	6
Coughing	4
No diseases	67
Total	100

Source: based on field survey 2013

### Conclusion and suggestions

The study found that the condition of rickshaw pullers in Malda town of West Bengal is very poor. Socio-economic condition of the workers in informal economy particularly the rickshaw pullers is very miserable. The result of the analysis clearly indicates that poverty, low income and Illiteracy are the main factors for the poor condition of the rickshaw puller of Malda town. They are suffering from various diseases like back pain, joint pain, body pain, fever, different chronic diseases etc. Few suggestions are incorporated as remedial measures for their improvement.

- Govt. should provide insurance facilities for vehicle in course of any damage and loss occurred to the rickshaws.
- Should provide free or cheap health and medical facilities in course of illness and injuries.
- Should provide rickshaw stand for the Rickshaw pullers
- Separate tracks should be created for rickshaws so that they do not have to compete for road space with fast moving traffic.
- They should be informed about the existing schemes and facilities started by the district administration for their general welfare.
- They should be provided with Auto Rickshaws to improve their socio-economic conditions.
- Payment should be fixed as per the distance is pulled by the rickshaw pullers in a day.

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