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## Demographic, occupational, and living conditions of sweepers: A comprehensive analysis

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### Abstract

Cleanliness since ages was priority for everyone. Our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi as he launched the Swachh Bharat Mission at Rajpath in New Delhi. On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014, Swachh Bharat Mission was launched throughout length and breadth of the country as a national movement. The study was conducted in Hisar and Fatehabad district having sample size of 280 respondents. This study investigates the demographic, educational, and occupational characteristics of sweepers in Hisar and Fatehabad districts. The majority of respondents (43.57%) are aged 20-30 years, with a significant portion holding middle school education (27.14%). Family backgrounds reveal low education status for 60.71% of respondents, and most work in elementary occupations (76.07%). Family size tends to be small (52.85%), and living conditions include basic amenities but lack medical facilities (65.71%). Sweepers predominantly engage in brooming, washroom cleaning, and mopping, with limited use of protective gear such as gloves and masks. The data indicates varied use of footwear and cleaning agents, with a reliance on phenyl and Harpic. This comprehensive analysis highlights the socio-economic and occupational conditions of sweepers, providing insights into their working environment and living standards.

**Keywords:** Sweepers, occupational, workplace conditions, socio-economic conditions

### Introduction

#### “Cleanliness is next to godliness” Cleric John Wesley

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014, Swachh Bharat Mission was launched throughout length and breadth of the country as a national movement. “A clean India would be the best tribute India could pay to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150 birth anniversary in 2019. Times from last decade in country could be counted as golden age for satisfaction in India. What started out as the total sanitation campaign in 1990’s morphed into the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan under the UPA government and then transferred into the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan with full force by the Prime Minister’s special attention. Sanitation workers still faces multifaceted challenges like mode of employment, low wages, and health hazards.

In 2010, the ILO reported that there were around 52.6 million individuals engaged in such work. It's important to highlight those women and girls form a substantial majority among these workers. According to the International Labor Organization, sweepers are vulnerable to a range of health issues, such as influenza, cough, eye irritation, skin rashes, digestive problems, chronic cough, and eye diseases.

Sweepers are among the lowest paid workers and many are employed on a part time, contractual or informal basis. Maximum of sweepers in India is on contractual basis rather than government basis. Now all big type of institutes private/ government hire people for cleaning and sweeping activities. The sweepers are doing their work in both morning and evening shifts for long durations.

### Objectives

1. To study the demographic profile of female sweeper.
2. To analyze the occupational and living conditions of female sweepers.

## Methodology

The study was conducted in Hisar and Fatehabad districts of Haryana, focusing on both government and private institutions in each district. A total of 280 female sweepers, performing similar tasks such as dusting, brooming, washroom cleaning, and mopping, were randomly selected from these districts. Female sweepers from the selected

institutions were randomly chosen to achieve a sample of 70 females from each type of institute in both districts. Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire administered through face-to-face interviews conducted in the respondents' local language.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1:** Socio-personal profile of female sweepers in Hisar and Fatehabad district (N=280)

Variables	Category	Hisar (N=140)		Fatehabad (N=140)		Total (N=280)
		Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	
Age (in years)	20-30	33(47.14)	27(38.57)	26(37.14)	36(51.42)	122(43.57)
	31-40	17(24.28)	27(38.57)	28(40.00)	27(38.57)	99(35.35)
	41-50	20(28.57)	16(22.85)	16(22.85)	7(10.00)	59(21.07)
Education of respondent	Illiterate	10(14.28)	9(12.85)	11(15.71)	16(22.85)	46(16.42)
	Primary school	21(30.00)	16(22.85)	8(11.42)	13(18.57)	58(20.71)
	Middle school	23(32.85)	20(28.57)	16(22.85)	17(24.28)	76(27.14)
	High school	10(14.28)	13(18.57)	19(27.14)	13(18.57)	55(19.64)
	Post high school diploma	16(22.85)	12(17.14)	16(22.85)	11(15.71)	55(19.64)
Educational qualification (head of family)	Illiterate	5(7.14)	12(17.14)	3(4.28)	12(17.14)	32(11.42)
	Primary school	8(11.42)	7(10.00)	6(8.57)	10(14.28)	31(11.07)
	Middle school	16(22.85)	13(18.57)	16(22.85)	10(14.28)	55(19.64)
	High school	24(34.28)	20(28.57)	27(38.57)	18(25.71)	89(31.78)
	Post high school diploma	17(24.28)	18(25.71)	18(25.71)	19(27.14)	72(25.71)
Family education status	Low (1-4)	42(60.00)	54(77.14)	35(50.00)	39(55.71)	170(60.71)
	Medium (4-8)	20(28.57)	17(24.28)	25(35.71)	22(31.42)	84(30.00)
	High (above8)	07(10.00)	10(14.28)	05(7.14)	04(5.71)	26(9.28)
Family type	Joint	35(50.00)	21(30.00)	19(27.14)	20(28.57)	95(33.92)
	Nuclear	28(40.00)	38(54.28)	36(51.42)	44(62.85)	143(51.07)
	Extended	7(10.00)	11(15.71)	15(21.42)	6(8.57)	39(13.92)
Family size	Small (up to 4 member)	28(40.00)	40(57.14)	36(51.42)	44(62.85)	148(52.85)
	Medium (5-6 member)	35(50.00)	20(28.57)	19(27.14)	20(28.57)	94(33.57)
	Large (7 & above)	7(10.00)	10(14.28)	15(21.42)	6(8.57)	38(13.57)
Family occupation	Unemployed	20(28.57)	20(28.57)	11(15.71)	16(22.85)	67(23.92)
	Elementary occupation	50(71.42)	50(71.42)	59(84.28)	54(77.14)	213(76.07)
Material possession **	Refrigerator	10(14.28)	20(28.57)	17(24.28)	16(22.85)	63(22.5)
	Television	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	280(100.0)
	Motorcycle	16(22.85)	15(21.42)	17(24.28)	18(25.71)	66(23.57)
	Mixer grinder	13(18.57)	12(17.14)	10(14.28)	9(12.85)	44(15.71)
	Washing machine	13(18.57)	15(21.42)	15(21.42)	14(20.00)	57(20.35)
	Mobile phone	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	280(100.0)

\*Figure in parenthesis indicates percentage \*\*Material possession has multiple response

**Age:** Perusal of table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents (43.57%) were in age group of 20-30 years followed by respondents (35.35%) in 31-40 years and remaining (21.07%) were falling in 41-50 years of age group. Table further denotes that in private institutes of Hisar (22.85%) and Fatehabad (10.0%) were in age group of 40-50 years. Majority of due respondents working in private institute of Fatehabad (51.42%) were in age group of 20-30 years.

**Education of respondents:** Data reveals that majority of respondents (27.14%) were educated up to middle school and respondents 20.71 per cent had primary school education, 19.64 per cent of respondents had both high school and post high school diploma and remaining 16.42 per cent were found to be illiterate.

**Education qualification (head of family):** Table 1 illustrate that from the pooled data majority of respondents 31.78 per cent were high school based and 25.71 percent were found to be obtained education up to post high school diploma and illiterate (11.42%).

**Family education status:** Table 1 further depicts that from collective data less than two third of respondents (60.71%) had low family education status and about one third

(30.00%) of them had medium and (9.28%) respondents had high family education status.

**Family type:** Regarding family type the results in table 1 unfold that 62.85 per cent from private institutes of Fatehabad were having nuclear family similarly near about half of them (54.28%) from Hisar district were also having nuclear family. From the cumulative data about half of respondents (51.07%) in total sample were having nuclear family, joint family (33.92%) and (13.92%) were had extended family.

**Family size:** Data in Table 1 revealed that from pooled sample majority had small family size (52.85%) whereas 33.57 per cent were having medium family size (5-6 members) and (13.57%) were having large family having more than 7 members. Further Table 1 unveiled that respondents of private institutes of Fatehabad (62.85%) and Hisar (57.14%) also had small family. About half of respondents (50%) from government institutes of Hisar district had medium sized family.

**Family occupation (head of family):** In the combined sample, a significant majority of respondents 76.07 per cent were engaged in elementary occupations, with 23.92 per cent being unemployed. The table 1 also highlights that in

Hisar district, the majority of respondents (71.42%) from both government and private institutes were employed in elementary occupations. In Fatehabad district, even higher proportions of respondents from government institutes (84.28%) and from private institutes (77.14%) were also found to be in elementary occupations. However, in Hisar district around 28.57 per cent of respondents were unemployed.

### Material possession

The data in the table 1 indicates that cent percent of the respondents had access to television and mobile phones. Following this, 23.57 per cent of respondents had motorcycles, 22.5 per cent possessed refrigerators, and 20.35 per cent had washing machines. Only a small percentage of respondents, specifically 15.71 per cent of the total sample, had mixer grinders.

**Table 2:** Type of activity performed by female sweepers (N=280)

Variables	Category	Hisar (N=140)		Fatehabad (N=140)		Total (N=280)
		Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	
Type of activity performed by sweepers	Dusting	15(21.42)	18(25.71)	12(17.14)	14(20.00)	59(21.07)
	Brooming	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	280(100.00)
	Mopping	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	280(100.00)
	Washroom cleaning	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	70(100.00)	280(100.00)

Table 2 provides information about the type of activities performed by sweepers. The data in the table indicates that in both government and private institutes in Hisar and Fatehabad districts, all respondents were engaged in

activities such as brooming, washroom cleaning, and mopping. Additionally, sweepers (21.07%) were occasionally found to be performing dusting activities.

**Table 3:** Basic facilities available for female sweepers at workplace (N=280)

Facilities	Category	Hisar (N=140)		Fatehabad (N=140)		Total (N=280)
		Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	
Toilet		70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	280(100.0)
Drinking water		70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	70(100.0)	280(100.0)
Medical facilities	Yes	17(24.28)	30(42.85)	29(41.42)	20(28.57)	96(34.28)
	No	53(75.71)	40(57.14)	41(58.57)	50(71.42)	184(65.71)
Place of residence	Near institution (2km)	16(22.85)	15(21.42)	14(20.00)	27(38.57)	72(25.71)
	Within institution	12(17.14)	8(11.42)	15(21.42)	6(8.57)	41(14.64)
	Away from institution (5km)	42(60.00)	47(67.14)	41(58.57)	37(52.85)	167(59.64)

\*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage

Table 3 provides insights into the basic facilities available at the workplace. A critical view of the data reveals that all respondents from both government and private institutes in Hisar and Fatehabad had access to basic facilities such as drinking water and toilets. When looking at the combined data, the majority of respondents (65.71%) reported to have no medical facilities provided by their institutes, while the

remaining (34.28%) had such facilities available. Regarding the place of residence, less than two third respondents (59.64%) lived 5km away from the institution, while 25.71 per cent resided near the institution. In government and private institutes in Hisar and Fatehabad districts, about one-third of the respondents lived near the institution, and more than half resided around 5km away from the institution.

**Table 4:** Personal protective clothing used by female sweepers (N=280)

Category	Hisar (N=140)		Fatehabad (N=140)		Total (N=280)
	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	
Uniform	22(31.42)	19(27.14)	20(28.57)	17(24.28)	78(27.85)
Daily wear	48(68.57)	51(72.85)	50(71.42)	53(75.71)	202(72.14)
Mask	20(28.57)	35(50.00)	16(22.85)	26(37.14)	97(34.64)
Gloves	21(30.00)	28(40.00)	19(27.14)	26(37.14)	94(33.57)
Slippers made of rubber	33(47.14)	29(41.42)	27(38.57)	37(52.85)	126(45.0)
Boots/shoes	37(52.85)	41(58.87)	43(61.42)	33(47.14)	154(55.0)

\*Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage multiple responses

Table 4 data reveals that only around one third of sweepers (27.85%) used uniforms, while the majority (72.14%) wore their casual dress only. Additionally, 34.64% used masks, and 33.57% used gloves during sweeping activities. When it comes to footwear, in government institutes in both Hisar(52.85%) and Fatehabad (61.42%) the majority of respondents used boots or shoes in winter season. The remaining respondents in Hisar (47.14%) and Fatehabad

(38.57%) wore slippers in summer season. In private institutes in both the districts, about half of the respondents used shoes, with Hisar at (41.42%) and Fatehabad at (52.85%), while the rest used slippers. Overall, the data suggests that (55.0%) of respondents used boots or shoes during sweeping activities, while 45.0 per cent opted for rubber slippers. Climate wise clothing's and foot wear changes.

**Table 5:** Cleaning agents used for sweeping activity (N=280)

Cleaning agents	Hisar (N=140)		Fatehabad (N=140)		Total (N=280)
	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	
Detergent	70(100.00)	70(100.0)	70(100.00)	70(100.0)	280(100.0)
Phenyl	50(71.42)	70(100.0)	58(82.85)	70(100.0)	248(88.57)
Toilet cleaner (Harpic)	53(75.71)	43(61.42)	44(62.85)	32(45.71)	172(61.42)

Table 5 provides information about the cleaning agents used for sweeping activities. The data shows that from the combined data of both government and private institutes, all female sweepers used detergent as a cleaning agent. Additionally, 88.57 per cent of them used phenyl, and used Harpic(61.42%) for toilet cleaning. In government institutes

in Hisar (71.42%) and Fatehabad (82.85%), as well as in private institutes in both districts, cent percent of female sweepers used phenyl as a cleaning agent. More than half of the sweepers in government institutes in Hisar and Fatehabad utilized Harpic for toilet cleaning.

**Table 6:** SOP followed by female sweepers for garbage disposal (N=280)

Variables	Category	Hisar (N=140)		Fatehabad (N=140)		Total (N=280)
		Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	Government (N=70)	Private (N=70)	
Way of carrying garbage load	Manually	50(71.42)	38(54.28)	48(68.57)	45(64.28)	181(64.64)
	Through trolley	20(28.57)	32(45.71)	22(31.42)	25(32.85)	99(35.35)
Collecting garbage	With gloves	21(30.00)	20(28.57)	31(44.28)	32(45.71)	104(37.14)
	Without gloves	49(70.00)	50(71.42)	39(55.71)	38(54.28)	176(62.85)
Distance travelled to unload dustbin	100-200m	18(25.71)	15(21.42)	19(27.14)	20(28.57)	72(25.71)
	200-300m	33(47.14)	31(44.28)	37(52.85)	19(27.14)	120(42.85)
	More than 300m	19(27.14)	24(34.28)	14(20.00)	31(44.28)	88(31.42)

A review of table 6 reveals that less than two third (64.64%) of sweepers manually carry garbage, while about 35.35per cent use trolleys for this purpose. More than half of the female sweepers from government and private institutes in Hisar and Fatehabad districts collect garbage without wearing gloves. In government institutes in Hisar (30.00%) and Fatehabad (44.28%), as well as in private institutes in Hisar (28.57%) and Fatehabad (45.71%), some sweepers make use of gloves while carrying garbage. Considering the combined data, the majority of respondents (42.85%) travel a distance of 200-300 meters to unload the dustbins, followed by (31.42%) who travel more than 300 meters, and the remaining (25.71%) travel a distance of 100-200 meters.

### Conclusion

The data indicates that the majority of respondents are young adults aged 20-30 years, predominantly with middle school education. Most respondents work in elementary occupations and come from small, nuclear families. Access to basic facilities like drinking water and toilets is generally adequate, but a significant portion lacks medical facilities. Material possession is modest, with widespread ownership of televisions and mobile phones, but limited access to appliances like washing machines and mixer grinders. The use of protective gear is inconsistent, with many sweepers not using gloves or uniforms, and footwear varies by season. Cleaning practices involve detergents, phenyl, and Harpic, with a significant portion of respondents manually carrying garbage and traveling varying distances to unload it. The data highlights areas for improvement in workplace safety and resource availability, ultimately suggesting that enhanced protective measures and better facilities could significantly improve the working conditions and health outcomes for sweepers in these districts.

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