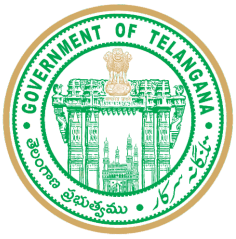

TELANGANA SOCIO, ECONOMIC, EDUCATIONAL, EMPLOYMENT, POLITICAL AND CASTE (SEEEPC) SURVEY - 2024

INDEPENDENT EXPERT WORKING GROUP REPORT - 2025

(Volume-I)

Government of Telangana

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INTRODUCTION

In March 2025, the Government of Telangana constituted a nine-member Independent Expert Working Group (IEWG) to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste (SEEEPC) Survey 2024. The IEWG was mandated to verify, analyse, interpret and present the findings of SEEEPC 2024.

The government appointed Justice B. Sudershan Reddy, a former Supreme Court Judge as the Chairman, Prof. Kancha Ilaiah, former Director of the Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, as Vice Chairman and Mr. Praveen Chakravarty, visiting professor at Ashoka University and All India Chairman of the Data Analytics & Professionals' wings of the Indian National Congress as the Convenor. The other members are Dr. Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chair of the University Grants Commission; Prof. Shantha Sinha, former Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights; Prof. Bhangya Bhukya, professor at the department of history, University of Hyderabad (Expert in Tribal Studies); Prof. Purushotham Reddy, an Environmentalist, retired professor & Head of Department at Osmania University. Prof. Himanshu, Associate Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and Mr. Nikhil Dey, a social activist and founding member of MKSS. In addition, Prof. Jean Drèze, development economist, Prof. Thomas Piketty, scholar on inequality and Prof. Julia Cage of Sciences Po contributed as special invitees to the IEWG. All members and special invitees served in an honorary capacity contributing their expertise and time in preparation of this report.

Since its inception, the IEWG convened five meetings over a three-month period—four at the Marri Chenna Reddy Human Resource Development Institute (MCRHRDI) in Hyderabad and one at the Constitution Club of India in New Delhi—to define its scope and workplan, develop outlines and preliminary analyses, review draft chapters and methodology, refine the report framework, and formally approve the draft report.

This report aims to offer a nuanced interpretation of the SEEEPC Survey 2024 data—identifying socio-economic, education, employment and other disparities, assessing backwardness, and situating findings within Telangana's constitutional and socio-historical context.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Telangana Congress Government, under the leadership of Sri Anumula Revanth Reddy, Hon'ble Chief Minister, and Sri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Finance, Planning, and Energy, constituted the Independent Expert Working Group (IEWG) to comprehensively examine the Socio-Economic, Education, Employment, Political, and Caste Survey – 2024. The Government placed the entire dataset at the Group's disposal, reflecting its full trust and transparency in the process.

The IEWG expresses its deep gratitude to the Government of Telangana, and in particular to the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, for the confidence reposed in this Expert Group and for enabling an evidence-based, data-driven review of this significant statewide survey.

The IEWG places on record its sincere gratefulness to Sri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Finance, Planning, and Energy, for extending comprehensive support and facilitation throughout the Group's work. His office provided essential secretarial assistance, infrastructure, and logistical arrangements, including travel, accommodation, and coordination support. The IEWG conveys its gratitude to him and his dedicated team of officers for their unwavering cooperation and commitment during the Group's intensive three-month tenure.

The IEWG also extends its heartfelt thanks to the Director General and staff of the Dr. Marri Channa Reddy Human Resource Development Institute of Telangana (MCRHRD) for their gracious hospitality and logistical support. The Institute provided the venue, facilities, and essential amenities—including food, refreshments, and other arrangements—that greatly facilitated the Group's deliberations and smooth conduct of its work.

When this Expert Group was constituted, the true magnitude, complexity, and transformative potential of the task before us had not yet fully dawned upon us. It was only after our first detailed deliberations that we began to realise the historic importance of this endeavour — one that could serve as a cornerstone in reshaping the social justice framework not only for Telangana but for the entire nation.

We take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Government of Telangana, led by Hon'ble Chief Minister Sri Anumula Revanth Reddy and Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister Sri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, for their vision, courage, and commitment in commissioning such an evidence-based and inclusive initiative. Their unwavering faith in empirical data, transparency, and participatory governance has made this pioneering exercise possible.

This report stands as a testament to the collective will and dedication of innumerable individuals—officers, field investigators, experts, and community representatives—who worked tirelessly with a shared belief in the values of equity, justice, and inclusiveness. Their contributions, and the Government's resolute support, have together made it possible for the IEWG to produce a document that aspires to guide policymaking with compassion, credibility, and scientific rigour

for years to come.

The Group derived immense benefit from its engagements with the Backward Classes Commission of Telangana, as well as with leading academics, scholars, policy activists, empirical researchers, and political leaders. Their diverse perspectives and expertise greatly enriched the Group's understanding of the issues at hand. The Group expresses special gratitude to the surviving members of the Mandal Commission, whose reflections and experiences—though drawn from four decades ago—offered invaluable insights and historical depth to this contemporary exercise.

The Expert Group extends its deep gratitude to Prof. Jean Drèze, Prof. Thomas Piketty, and Prof. Julia Cagé, whose insightful and timely suggestions shaped the very foundation of the Composite Backwardness Index.

And most importantly, no words of gratitude can truly capture the depth of appreciation the IEWG holds for the extraordinary support, coordination, and commitment extended by the officers of the Government of Telangana, particularly Sri Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS, and Sri Anudeep Durishetty, IAS. Their unfailing responsiveness, administrative efficiency, and personal involvement ensured that the work of this Expert Group proceeded smoothly and without interruption at every stage.

The Group also acknowledges with sincere thanks the meticulous logistical and organisational assistance rendered by the dedicated team of the Planning Department, including Sri Rufus Dattam, Sri Om Prakash, and Sri Ram Bhadram. Their quiet yet steadfast efforts—coordinating meetings, ensuring timely communication, and providing all necessary arrangements—played a crucial role in the successful completion of this important exercise.

The team from the Centre for Good Governance (CGG) — Ms. Maadhavi, Mr. Lokesh, and Mr. Karthik — extended exceptional technical and analytical support throughout the course of this work. Their professionalism, patience, and promptness in responding to the Expert Group's frequent and often complex data requests were truly commendable.

The Group also acknowledges the invaluable contributions of Deepthi Battini, whose energy, commitment kept the Group's work cohesive and focused. Vikas Srivastava provided the analytical backbone of the report, transforming complex SEEEPC data into clear, compelling visuals and narratives with creativity and precision. Finally, the Group sincerely thanks

Ravi Siriki and Suresh Miryala for their meticulous design and production support, ensuring the report was presented with clarity, elegance, and professionalism.

These officers embody the true spirit of public service envisioned by the founding leaders of our nation—dedicated, selfless, and quietly steadfast in their commitment to the greater good. Their work reflects an integrity and devotion that often go unrecognized but form the very backbone of democratic governance. To paraphrase Isaac Newton, "*if this report has seen further, it is only by standing on the shoulders of the unseen.*" Their invisible yet invaluable contributions have made this effort not only possible but deeply meaningful.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We, the people of India, an ancient nation and civilization, constituted for ourselves a modern nation state to secure for all the citizens, JUSTICE – social, economic and political; LIBERTY – of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY, of status and opportunity. As those familiar with the debates in the Constituent Assembly would know, to those three great values, as enunciated first by Pandit Nehru in the Objectives Resolution, Babasaheb Ambedkar added the goal of FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual, and the unity and integrity of the Nation. It was well recognized by our Founding Fathers that subjugation of India was enabled by the debasement of dignity of vast swathes of humanity on the evil anvil of casteism, and that true freedom for the nation could be assured only if the injustices of systemic "graded inequalities" inscribed on the soul of our nation were progressively and rapidly undone.

The foregoing understanding is transcribed into the body of the Constitution, in the form of both the Fundamental Rights (in particular, Articles 14, 15, 16 and 17 – the equality code -, and Articles 19 and 21) and the Directive Principles of State Policy (which, though not directly enforceable in a court of law, are stated in the Constitutional text to be fundamental to governance). Article 37 states that it is the "duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws". In Article 38(1), it is mandated that the State shall strive for promotion of the welfare of the people by "securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all institutions of the national life" and furthermore in Article 38(2) particular emphasis is placed on elimination of "inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations".

On the day our Constitution was ratified, Babasaheb warned us that the Constitution and the temple of democracy could be demolished if, in addition to a formal political equality, we do not urgently undo the endemic and horrifying graded social and economic equalities. It should be pointed out that in arguing the case for nationhood for India, Babasaheb pointed out, in the Constituent Assembly debates, that our ancient philosophies contain far more ancient and

stronger foundations for establishment of a true social democracy. In particular, he excavated from within the copious philosophies of India two fundamental principles: (a) that the self is constituted by the universal motive; and (b) that we are also expected to find in others the same universality. Consequently, Babasaheb argued that the origins of the idea of indefeasible core of human dignity, in each of us as individuals as well as members of different social groups, is locatable within the corpus of our civilizational inheritance, and that by not being true to our genuine social democratic and egalitarian roots, we destroyed the true foundations of a genuinely progressive nation.

Societies are not static. They change, with the passage of time and the actions of individuals and groups, market forces, political processes etc. The State, when captured by particular socio-political groupings and coalitions of economic interest, can lead to intensification of the uneven devolution of the benefits of collective action. Consequently, the directive that the State should strive to eliminate socio-economic inequalities of all kinds must be viewed as an admonition in the present continuous tense. This aspect was recognized by the Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney (Mandal) case, when it mandated that the State has the constitutional responsibility to constantly monitor the well being of individuals as well as the social groups they belong to and frame appropriate ameliorative measures as required by changing and evolving situations.

In light of the foregoing Constitutional imperatives, it ought to be a matter of grave concern that neither at the national level nor at the level of individual states have comprehensive attempts consistently been made, to periodically identify all the various social groups that form the body social and take stock of how their members have been affected over time. Any programmatic action for amelioration of the social condition of groups has to begin with an understanding of the specifics of the human conditions of their individual members as well as of the group as a whole. Apart from the fact that resources available for distribution/allocation for welfare of all the people, and the groups they belong to, may be limited and hence ought to be directed for optimal social gain, it is also a matter of justice that the ones needing the greatest solicitousness of the State – as a collective of the conscience of the people – be given a priority. To leave the decisional matrix of such allocations to the mercy of short term political calculus, can only be expected to result in both misallocation, which is unjust in and of itself, and also leave the polity to be guided by the attempts at misdirection by those fearing honest attempts at taking stock as to what has been achieved or not, and what else remains to be done.

Over the past four decades or so, the political discourse of the powerful elite groups has been in the thrall of neo-liberal propositions. There has been little talk about the positive content of Fundamental Rights and the mandates of the Directive Principles of State Policy. This has consequently tamped down the moral urgency of the need to instantiate social justice as the motive force in every institution of national life. There are serious concerns regarding the extent of socio-economic inequality that has arisen, and worries of instantiation of a political economy of greed and rapacity are ever present. Consequently, if we go beyond the metric of holding periodic elections, there are also serious concerns about the health of the democracy, and its institutions. This is not a question of whether something has been achieved or not – of course the nation has; rather, this is about acknowledging that we could have done much, much more and that, way too many of our fellow citizens are being left far behind, suffering under the yoke of inherited/ascribed as well as newly engendered social and economic disabilities.

Of particular concern is in the sphere of equipping our masses – and the groups they belong to – with the socio-cultural and economic resources to be able to modulate the politic0-social discourse towards the goal of social justice. And on top of that, we are now confronted by the prospects of immense technological changes. These are likely to increase life spans, even as AI/ML and automation is likely to exponentially increase obsolescence of skills (and hence of unemployment), especially for those who have not been provided the opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to master and control such technologies. In addition, such advances are also likely to raise major socio-political questions about privacy, forms and intensity of cooperation/competition amongst individuals and social groups they belong to or identify with, governance, political decision making, etc. Apart from the potential for uneven distribution of benefits, and thereby magnifying material inequalities, we also have to be concerned about the prospects of immense intensification of epistemic inequalities in the very foundations of our social discourse. These will have an immense impact on our individual and social lives. How the collective decisions regarding modulation of such emerging technologies are made, what value is given to the impact of the consequent individual and social actions, as well as the distribution of such impacts across groups and regions, and whether the same are allowed to be subject of democratic discourses and practices should be a matter of concern for all citizens. Which of the citizens have been enabled to have the social and intellectual capital to participate and influence such social and political discourses and decisions will have a vital bearing on whether the constitutional goal of social justice is continued to be pursued as a constitutional, and hence national, imperative.

Given the unease about what has been done or not done, in pursuit of promotion of social justice as an antidote to the inherited/ascribed as well as the newly created inequalities and inequities, and the challenges that we, the people as a nation, will soon face, it is vital that the State, as the repository of our collective conscience and power, consistently undertake exercises to take stock of how our people are faring, both as individuals and the social groups they form. This can also reasonably be expected to inform us with regard to how our people – rather, the people as a nation - will face future challenges and hence how our nation might fare. These are all questions of essential human dignity, and hence intrinsic aspects of the Right to Life guaranteed in Article 21 of the Constitution of India, and arguably a threat to the unity and integrity of the nation.

It must be readily acknowledged that there has been an extreme reluctance to consistently undertake such comprehensive exercises. This flies in the face of the Constitutional gloss as enunciated by the Supreme Court of India time and again; and it is tantamount to a fraud in the face of the Constitution, which makes the promotion of social justice an existential moral imperative. Hence, the decision by the State of Telangana, vide its G.O. Ms No 18 dated 10-10-2024, to undertake and complete a "comprehensive door to door survey (Socio, Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste Survey) in order to plan and implement various social justice programmes for the amelioration of Backward Classes, SC and ST citizens of the State and other weaker sections, has to be welcomed as long overdue. As a part of this exercise, a Comprehensive Backwardness Index ("CBI") has also been developed, based on scientific inputs of a group of experts. Both are steps in the right Constitutional direction. It is my belief that CBI can provide the policy makers a highly granular perspective of the problems that need to be addressed, enable more effective policies and provide a greater measure of control over the implementation.

The report of the survey exercise conducted by the State of Telangana speaks for itself, and it is not the place of this writer to summarize or otherwise try to selectively emphasize. But a few words of caution, and of hope, are necessary. Any attempt to capture a snapshot of the society is necessarily likely to be imperfect to some extent or the other. This is because of the nature of the social, and the epistemic imperfections of available tools of study. Our moral concern for the welfare of our people necessarily requires us to be humble. Hence, it is also hoped that the ensuing discussions will be reasoned and reasonable, so that they may inform further studies that refine the picture. However, the inability to meet any arbitrary standards of metaphysical purity should also not be taken as reason for inaction. Our quest for greater knowledge of the conditions of our

fellow citizens should continue; but urgency of our need to act to ameliorate, and rapidly promote greater instantiation of goals of social justice, should be rooted in our innate empathy for those being left behind and our instinct for justice.

In as much as this exercise was ambitious, and also complex, it must be recognized that many a minds and hands have contributed in the production of this report. While it would be impossible to name each and everyone, we must acknowledge a debt of Constitutional gratitude to all of them. The boldness of the political leadership of the Government of Telangana must be acknowledged for going ahead with the survey and constituting an expert group to analyze the data collected. It is hoped that the Government of Telangana does decide to publish the report. It can be easily recognized that it will not be without political consequences. Notwithstanding what they might be, from the perspective of constitutional imperatives, all of the people of Telangana can be proud of this bold step forward. Hopefully, it will also act as an encouragement for other governments and political powers that be, across the length and breadth of this country to undertake similar exercises and thereby enhance overall fealty to the foundational principles of our Constitution. Many distinguished scholars, both from India and other parts of the World, have contributed in analysing the data of the survey. To such scholars, who are always anxious about the vast swathes of humanity being left behind, we the people of Telangana owe immeasurably. In a World in which cannons are ever ready to roar, and more recently have begun to roar again very loudly and across many places, we can only pray that such muses do not ever fall silent. The light of their scholarship is necessary to always keep the path to our innate human dignity brightly lit.

Now, it is over to the people of Telangana, in particular, and India in general.

Justice B. Sudershan Reddy
Chairperson, Independent Expert Working Group
Telangana SEEEPC Survey 2024

FROM THE VICE-CHAIRMAN

The IEWG constituted by the Telangana Government had a complicated task at hand. Never before had any government or committee dared to undertake such an enormous and intricate task — to analyse caste survey data with full independence and frame a path for doing justice to those who remain most backward in the caste hierarchy. The committee devoted two meetings to evolving a methodology to gauge and rank backwardness and agreed on the idea of a Composite Backwardness Index (CBI), a first-of-its-kind in India.

The Socio, Economic, Educational, Employment and Political and Caste (SEEEPC) survey of Telangana is the first ever comprehensive survey undertaken by a state government for the purpose of providing a mirror image of all castes in the state. Such a survey was not part of the decadal census of India since 1951. Even the 1931 census did not capture such elaborate caste-wise data to understand the socio-economic, educational, employment and political mobility of each caste. It just provided the numbers of castes and religions.

Whether it is a national decadal census or a survey of the kind that the Telangana Government had undertaken, the participation of persons or households is voluntary. The citizens have a right to participate or not participate as non-participation does not entail any punitive action or loss of welfare rights of the citizens. The state has no compulsory enforcement power over the citizens. Citizens' participation in such a survey is in the interest of themselves and the state and also it is only a moral obligation of the citizens, not a legal obligation.

The data of the survey opens several sociological and anthropological possibilities to study and interpret in a myriad of ways. The data was collected from every household by the enumerators, covering 57 main questions and several sub-questions. As a result, a huge mine of information emerged from the survey for scholars to unpack several aspects of peoples' socio-economic, educational and political life.

The data does not provide much scope for analyzing the cultural life of castes. It is a known fact that culture too plays a critical role in change, mobility and development of castes. However, it captured many crucial aspects of human life in relation to how the modern democratic state could intervene and change. The details of which are in the APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY OF THE TELANGANA SEEEPC SURVEY-2024.

The CBI worked out by the committee puts all castes' socio- economic, education and political status in terms of least backward and most backward castes in the state. As you see in the report, this is the first ever attempt to estimate each caste's hierarchical status in the process of development. This CBI opens possibilities for the state to target the most backward castes for upward mobility and the communities can ask for their just share in the sphere of state resources.

Individual Welfare or Caste Welfare

The Telangana caste survey has brought forth an idea that Indian democracy cannot model its welfare development based on the individualist welfare model of the West, at least until the caste based social structure disintegrates. The welfare has to focus on caste as a cluster. This report will show why caste should be taken as a key component in democratic welfarism.

This report shows that lower the caste in the Telangana social hierarchy, higher is its backwardness. One can see this among the Madigas, the largest Dalit caste in the state, and among Backward Classes, the Pichakuntla are the lowest in the ladder by most parameters. The social status of these castes both among the OBCs and Dalits is also lowest. The survey did not capture the modes of untouchability still being practiced against all castes of Dalits, as there was no question in the manual about practices of human untouchability in daily life. The survey did not capture inter- dining, living space untouchability, untouchability at work place and so on. Two questions in the manual tried to capture discrimination around inter-caste marriage and temple entry. However, Dalit untouchability as listed in the SC/ST Atrocities Act continues to exist in many more forms.

The tribals of Telangana are broadly divided into two categories—forest tribes, who broadly live along Godavari banks in the northern belt. They constitute Gonds, Koyas, and Konda Reddys and also in Southern Telangana on the banks of Krishna river in Nallamala forest Chenchu Tribes live. Tribes from the plains constitute mainly Lambadas, Yerukulas and Yanadi and so on. The Lambada tribe is spread over the entire state and is the largest tribe. They too live in caste clusters with rigid rules of marriage and dining.

There is a general economist view that there is a close relationship between land ownership of a caste and its upward mobility in developmental ladder. SEEEPC survey shows that a very high percentage of scheduled tribes own land, largely dry and not irrigated land. However, despite the large land ownership, scheduled tribes remain at the bottom of the social pyramid in many other parameters. A significantly high share of Dalit Christians who come under the BC-C group, with just one per cent reservation, are English medium educated. In most of the parameters used for computing CBI, this group of Dalit Christians (BC-C) and OC (General Castes) Christians, rank among the least backward, similar to those in the General Caste category.

The entire report shows that human developmental processes even in a once backward identity group has shifted from land centrality to education centrality.

Prof. Kancha Ilaiah
Vice Chairman,
Independent Expert Working Group
Telangana SEEEPC Survey 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

'Backwardness' in human societies is an abstract, largely intangible social idea, but one rooted in relativity. It is fundamentally a relative concept of how certain people fare vis-à-vis others in society. Backwardness or deprivation is the opposite of progress or development. Progress or development is construed more as a temporal concept relative to time -- are we doing better this year than the previous year. On the other hand, backwardness or 'being left behind' is relative to other people -- is one group of people doing worse than the other - either within the same geographical boundary or within the same culture or same social category or some other form of human organisation.

If development and progress can be observed, measured and presented quantitative evidence of, through metrics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), then its corollary, backwardness, while observed, can also be measured and provided quantitative evidence of. This is precisely what this report hopes to do -- measure and provide evidence of the extent of relative backwardness, as observed and self-described by 3.55 crore (35 million) people in the state of Telangana, organised into 242 castes.

"Everything that counts cannot be counted; Everything that can be counted does not count"

This aphorism attributed to the great scientist Albert Einstein captures the essence of the endeavour of this report. The human impulse to count and measure represents one of humankind's most fundamental cognitive achievements, emerging from practical necessity and evolving into sophisticated philosophical inquiry about the nature of reality. The ancient Indian philosopher Kanada in 200 BC posited that 'perception and inference' are the only two reliable sources of knowledge, which laid the foundations for the philosophy of empiricism[1] . Empiricists believed that 'in order to understand the nature of things, they must begin by asking, not whether a thing is good or bad, noxious or beneficial, but of what kind it is? And how much is there of it?'

The human quest to distill complex realities into single, meaningful numbers represents one of our most profound intellectual achievements - transforming

1 Eliott Deutsche (2000), in Philosophy of Religion : Indian Philosophy Vol 4 (Editor: Roy Perrett), Routledge, ISBN 978-0815336112, pages 245-248

the messy, multidimensional nature of existence into data points that can guide decisions, diagnose problems, and measure progress. The concept of reducing complex phenomena to a single numerical value emerged from humanity's fundamental need to make sense of an overwhelming world.

The Telangana SEEEPC survey, colloquially referred to as the 'caste census' is a record of 3.55 crore (35 million) people's status, feelings, experiences and hopes captured through 75 fields of information for each individual that offers a rich insight into the 'health of Telangana society'. If the caste census is indeed an 'X ray' or a 'MRI', as it has been described by political leaders across the political spectrum, then true to an 'X ray' or a 'MRI' test, its results must also be presented as an objective report with quantifiable evidence that can be used to determine Telangana society's 'disparity illness' and the necessary targeted interventions they need to be remedied.

Composite Backwardness Index

The Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) is an effort to present a simple, objective, transparent, rigorous and easy-to-understand number to denote relative backwardness of a caste vis-à-vis other castes in the state of Telangana. CBI is a statistically derived measure using the responses of people to questions asked in the SEEEPC survey. The survey methodology is robust, and the dataset is large enough to be able to glean significant inferences and measure deprivation or backwardness at an aggregate level.

SEEEPC survey covers 97% of the entire population of Telangana and thus, empirically, it is a census and not a sample survey. 75 fields of data ranging from demographic information to caste to economic, education, employment, living conditions, assets, discrimination and many other parameters were collected by enumerators visiting every household in every geographical zone of the state. The SEEEPC dataset is a vast repertoire of self-reported information covering the entire gamut of lives and livelihoods of families in the state of Telangana. Any census or a survey is a collection of self-reported responses to questions and inherently carries the respondent's biases and prejudices. Perhaps certain information such as land ownership, income and occupational aspects in the SEEEPC survey may be subjected to these biases to varying degree across each caste. However, the statistical theorem of the 'law of large numbers' ensures that these biases even out and the average is closer to the truth.

Respondents were given an option to identify themselves as belonging to one of 242 caste groups. There was also an option of 'No Caste' for those that did not wish to associate themselves with a caste group and another option of 'Other' for

those that did not identify themselves with any of the 242 pre-defined castes. 13.7 lakh (1.4 million) people or nearly 4% of the entire population chose the 'No Caste or 'Others' option. The detailed methodology of how the census was conducted is given in APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY OF THE TELANGANA 2024 SEEEPC SURVEY. The expert group believes the SEEEPC survey methodology serves as the benchmark for other such initiatives across the country.

Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) is a holistic measure that uses 42 equally weighted parameters across various categories, drawing a distinction between rural and urban living standards, in a statistical quartile distribution to calculate the distance between the most backward and least backward quartile of castes in each parameter. CBI scores can range from 0 to 126. That is, if a caste is most backward in each of the 42 parameters, it gets a score of 126. If a caste is least backward in all parameters, it gets 0. We find that the most backward caste in Telangana SC Dakkal has a CBI score of 116 and the least backward caste is Kapu with a CBI score of 12. It is important to note that CBI is a relative measure of backwardness among social groups and castes in Telangana and does not say anything about absolute backwardness or vis-à-vis other social groups in the rest of the country.

Key Findings

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are three times more backward than General Castes. The Backward Classes are 2.7 times more backward than the General Caste. The weighted average CBI score for the entire state works out to 81. Recall, higher the CBI score, the more backward the caste. 135 out of the total 242 castes have a CBI score higher than 81. These 135 castes account for 67% of the total population. Of these 135 castes, 69 are classified as Backward Classes, 41 are Scheduled Castes and 25 are Scheduled Tribes. Expectedly, all the 18 castes within the more privileged 'General Caste' category that account for 12% of the total population fall well below the state CBI average.

Any ranking of any groups will inevitably have some at the top and some at the bottom, which can cause consternation. It is ironic that the CBI analysis will end up creating a 'hierarchy' of backwardness of Telangana's caste system. The expert committee recognises this.

The main conceptual finding of this report is that "every backward caste is not equally backward". While this may seem obvious, for the first time, there is empirical evidence and a numerical measure for this truism. Thus, if 135 castes fall below the state average, the corollary is that there are 107 castes that are deemed less backward than the state average. These 107 less backward castes

include all the 18 castes in the General Caste category, 64 castes in the Backward Class category, 18 in Scheduled Caste and 7 in the Scheduled Tribe category. These 107 castes account for 29% of the total population.

On a share of population, 99% of Scheduled Tribes, 97% of Scheduled Castes and 71% of Backward Class people are more backward than the state average.

The disparities are staggering. Nearly half of Scheduled Caste people in the workforce are daily wage labourers while just one-tenth of those in the General Caste are. 30% of private sector professionals are General Caste people while only 5% are Scheduled Tribes, despite their share of total population being similar. This may be driven by the fact that one-third of children in the General Caste group have access to private schools while only less than 10% of children in Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes do, which is a severe indictment of the public schooling system. One-third of Scheduled Tribe families live in homes with no toilet or tap water while only 5% of General Caste households suffer the same ignominy.

Even within the more backward social groups, the disparities are large. Within Backward Classes, nearly 75% of youth in Goldsmith and Padmasali castes are English medium educated while less than 30% of youth in Mudiraj, Valmiki or Pitchiguntla castes are. On average, people of the Mala Sale Scheduled Caste own three times larger land than those in the Mahar Scheduled Caste. Three times more children of the Gond tribe drop out of school than children of the Lambadi tribe. And even among the more prosperous General Castes, the inequities can be glaring. 62% of Reddys live in rural Telangana while only 30% of Komatis do.

But it must be emphasised that it is neither the mandate nor the intent of this committee to propose or even suggest which castes should be included in the BC/SC/ST/General category. That exercise is the sole discretion of bodies such as the Backward Class Commission and other such statutory bodies. This is merely an empirical and a scientific analysis of the hierarchy of backwardness of castes based on the SEEEPC survey.

The CBI analysis which was entirely a statistical and empirical exercise using self-reported responses of 3.55 crore (35 million) people revealed results that are remarkably consistent with sociologically, anthropologically and historically accepted wisdom of the role of caste and inequity in Telangana society. In that sense, CBI is a numerical validation of a sociological belief.

With CBI, there is now a numerical measure of backwardness for each of the 242 castes of Telangana and the broader social groups. This framework also gives a sense for the ‘backwardness distance’ between the most and the least backward

sections of society. More importantly, the CBI framework shifts the discourse of social disparities along caste lines from aggregate social groups and their share of population to one of specific caste groups and an objective measure of their backwardness. Of course, the CBI is just one framework of a backwardness index and ranking and by no means the final word. There will and must be many other scientifically rigorous methods to compute backwardness scores for caste groups by others, when the SEEEPC data is made available publicly for these purposes.

Caste or Poverty or Geography?

There is the perennial question of whether poverty is 'casteless' and poor families across all castes are equally backward, that has dogged thinkers and policy makers. There is one school of thought that says 'poverty is the only caste' which is to say that among the extreme poor, inter-caste disparities are not as high as they are in the more prosperous sections of society. The CBI framework provides an empirical way to test this hypothesis by checking if the CBI measures of only poor families across all sub castes are equivalent to each other and how it compares to CBI of the richer sections. The chapter IS POVERTY 'CASTELESS'? (in Volume-II) presents the interesting findings of this hypothesis test.

Similarly, the other intellectual contest between neo-classical economists and classical sociologists is the place (geography) versus identity question. In simple terms, what drives backwardness more – who is one born to or where is one born in? There is of course a conflation of the two and they are not as distinct but the CBI framework again helps understand this question by measuring CBI of people in rural areas versus urban areas to compare and contrast inter-caste disparities. The results of these are presented in the section Is Geography 'Casteless'?

Additionally, the SEEEPC dataset provided an opportunity to examine the idea of 'castelessness' or 'No Caste'. There is a section of thinkers in the country that argue that caste should not be a factor in discourse or governance and want to promote 'caste blind' policies to achieve a 'meritocratic' society. Nearly 1.5 million people in Telangana identified themselves as 'casteless' which is a large population group for a rigorous empirical study. These 1.5 million, like the others, responded to the SEEEPC survey and using their responses, it was possible to calculate their backwardness score (CBI) to see where they rank. Interestingly, this cohort of 'No Caste' people rank among the least backward groups of Telangana and are more developed in most parameters than the rest. The detailed discussion and findings of this analysis are in the chapter THE 'NO CASTE' STORY

Government Welfare Schemes: Does it Benefit the Most Backward Castes?

The SEEEPC survey also has information on how many people in each of the 242 caste groups claimed to receive benefits from which of the government schemes. It is a 'beneficiaries' claim' of government welfare than the traditional administrative claim of how many received what benefits. The chapter on GOVERNMENT SCHEMES: WHO BENEFITS AND WHO DOES NOT? presents the fascinating findings of this analysis. The headline finding from the SEEEPC dataset is that 30% of the total 2025-26 budgeted welfare expenditure of the Telangana government is going to people in caste groups that are less backward than the state average. The Telangana government proposes to spend nearly Rs.30,000 crores every year in agricultural schemes such as Rythu Barosa and free electricity to farmers. 15% of these beneficiaries are people from the more prosperous General Caste while only 12% are Scheduled Castes even though they are far greater in number and thrice as backward as the General Caste. On the flip side, 20% of beneficiaries of free bus travel for women are Scheduled Caste women while less than 10% are General Caste women, which goes to show this is perhaps a truer 'welfare' scheme than the agriculture schemes. Details of which scheme benefits which caste vis-a-vis their share of backwardness and share of population is presented in this chapter.

Limitations and Framework

The SEEEPC survey suffers from an important limitation of not adequately capturing the intangible ills of India's hierarchical caste system, as reflected in deep rooted, sub-conscious discrimination, and the scars of oppression suffered over several centuries as captured in the atrocities listed under the SC/ST Discrimination Act.

Additionally, one number such as the CBI will never adequately capture the despair, hopelessness and tragedy of people that are deprived and left behind. However, as a relative measure of disparity among castes, the SEEEPC survey is a significant development and first-of-its-kind in independent India's history. There are at a minimum three broad analytical frameworks one needs to be able to holistically assess, analyse and measure backwardness and disparities across caste and social groups:

1. Share of population of each social group
2. Share of participation of each group in education, employment, progress, living conditions
3. Share of representation of each group - in positions of power, business, jobs, assets etc.

The SEEEPC dataset covers only 1 and 2. It does not have data for the share of representation of each caste in various walks of society. This is an important factor that must be overlaid with this report for any comprehensive analysis of caste disparities and backwardness and to prescribe targeted policy actions as remedial measures.

With the CBI, there is also the paradox of measurement which can be reductive and even misleading. Which is what Einstein warned about not being able to count everything that counts. By no stretch is this committee's case that the CBI be taken as the final word on relative backwardness of castes in Telangana. It is just one pioneering effort in capturing the extremely important and sensitive issue of social disparity and discrimination in an objective, transparent and easy-to-understand manner.

CBI can be an analytical step forward but can also be a dangerous over simplification. It is just a tool that can either illuminate or obscure, depending on how wisely we wield its reductive power. Thus far, the debate and discourse on backwardness and caste disparities have focused on the share of population as a sole metric for policies of social justice such as reservations, affirmative actions and quotas. The idea of a CBI metric marks a profound shift in this discourse from share of population to level of backwardness of each caste in a similar framework of a measurable, objective single number. It is this committee's opinion that the time has come for us as a society to move to more direct, detailed and targeted social justice policies aimed at specific more backward caste groups to neutralise the curse of the 'birth lottery'.

This report is just an initial step to present an analytical framework for backwardness. This is neither comprehensive nor the final word. This Expert Group recommends that the aggregate data of SEEEPC Survey be made available to the larger public for further research, analysis, new findings, interpretations and debates.

To fulfil Dr. BR Ambedkar's vision of 'Annihilation of Caste', an honest and objective 'Analysis of Caste' is a necessary foundation. The Telangana 2024 SEEEPC Survey, this report and the idea of a 'Composite Backwardness Index' hope to lay the bricks for this foundation

Praveen Chakravarty
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Telangana SEEEPC Survey 2024

NOMENCLATURE & TERMINOLOGY

The Telangana Social Economic Educational Employment Political and Caste Survey (SEEEPC) is the official name for what is colloquially referred to as 'caste census'. SEEEPC survey uses the following categorisation of social identities of Telangana in a hierarchy of groups and castes within each group:

Table 1: Social Groups, Categories, Castes, Population and Share

Group	Category	Castes/ Tribes	Population	Share of Population
Backward Classes/Other Backward Classes (BC/OBC)	5 (BC-A, BC-B, BC-C, BC-D, BC-E)	133	2,00,35,840	56.4%
Scheduled Caste (SC)	1	59	62,25,413	17.4%
Other Caste (General Caste/OC)	1	18	42,42,905	11.9%
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	1	32	37,14,805	10.4%
No Caste (Do not wish to identify with caste)	1	N/A	11,96,482	3.4%
Others (Belong to a caste that is not listed)	1	N/A	1,74,002	0.5%

Respondents to the SEEEPC survey had the option of identifying themselves with one of the social groups listed above and subsequently one of the castes under each social group. There were 242 castes listed in the survey and a 'No Caste' and 'Others'. In Telangana, Backward Classes have been sub-categorised into BC-A, BC-B, BC-C, BC-D and BC-E as detailed in the 'Measuring Backwardness In Erstwhile Andhra Pradesh' Chapter.

As with any population characteristic, we observe a 'pareto' in this study too.

- 10 out of the 242 castes account for nearly 60% of the population
- 20 castes account for 75% of the population
- 56 castes accounting for 90% of total population.

The population range of castes in each social-category is given in the table below.

Table 2: Population range the total number of castes in each range

Group	Castes/ Tribes	Castes with more than 10 lakh population	Castes with 5 lakh - 10 lakh population	Castes with 1 lakh - 5 lakh population	Castes with 50,000 - 1 lakh population	Castes with less than 50,000 population
Backward Classes/Other Backward Classes (BC/ OBC)	133	6	4	15	10	98
Scheduled Caste (SC)	59	2	0	2	2	53
Other Caste (General Caste/OC)	18	1	2	4	3	8
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	32	1	0	3	1	27
Total	**242**	**10**	**6**	**24**	**16**	**186**
Share of population	*96.1%*	*58.7%*	*11.5%*	*16.4%*	*3.0%*	*6.5%*

56 castes with a minimum population of 50,000 people each that account for 90% of the total population form the basis for most of the analysis presented in this report. These 56 castes combined with 'No Caste' and 'Others' account for 95% of the entire population which is an extremely representative subset for analysis and findings. However, it is important to note that the share of population of a caste group is not a parameter for computation of that caste's CBI. In other words, a particular caste group's level of relative backwardness as measured by CBI is independent and regardless of its share of total population. This represents a fundamental shift in the discourse on backwardness in the country where the share of population has been a significant determinant of social justice policies.

THE EVOLUTION OF CASTE-BASED RESERVATIONS IN INDIA: Dr. SUKHDEO THORAT

The story of affirmative action in India is fundamentally a story of human dignity sought and slowly won. It spans centuries of struggle, beginning long before independence, in the progressive princely states where enlightened rulers first recognized that centuries of exclusion demanded centuries of inclusion.

The Early Awakening

In the mid-nineteenth century, when much of India remained trapped in medieval social hierarchies, a schoolteacher in Maharashtra began asking uncomfortable questions. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was among the first to systematically document what everyone knew but few acknowledged: that vast sections of Indian society—the Shudras, the untouchables, and women—were denied the most basic human right of all: the right to learn. Phule's writings from the eighteen-fifties onwards didn't merely describe discrimination; they dissected its anatomy, showing how exclusion operated through a thousand daily humiliations and systemic barriers.

While Phule wrote and agitated in Maharashtra, the princely state of Mysore quietly began what would become a revolution. As early as the eighteen-seventies, Mysore reserved positions in its civil services for backward classes. This wasn't charity—it was recognition that merit could not flourish where opportunity was denied. The Bombay government followed suit, reserving half its educational scholarships for Muslim and 'backward' Hindu students. In Travancore, the Ezhavas, considered a lower caste, submitted memoranda demanding that government jobs be distributed according to population proportions—a radical idea that would echo through the decades.

But it was in Kolhapur that the most dramatic transformation occurred. Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the ruler of this princely state, issued a notification that shocked the established order: half of all government positions would be reserved for non-Brahmins and backward classes. This wasn't mere tokenism. Shahu Maharaj understood that representation without preparation was meaningless, so he made education free, opened hostels for all communities, and personally ensured

that social barriers didn't prevent qualified candidates from taking their rightful places. He spoke of a "classless India" at a time when most couldn't imagine questioning caste.

The Language of Exclusion Becomes Political

As the twentieth century dawned, the terminology of discrimination began to crystallize. Christian missionaries had long used the term "Depressed Classes" to describe those crushed beneath the caste system. By the early nineteen-hundreds, this clinical term had entered the political lexicon. The Indian Councils Act granted separate electorates to Muslims and Sikhs but remained silent on the untouchables—a silence that spoke volumes about their invisibility in the political imagination of the time.

It was into this silence that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar stepped, armed not with weapons but with arguments so precisely constructed they could not be ignored. When he appeared before the Southborough Committee, he didn't merely request representation—he demanded recognition of full citizenship. His memoranda to various commissions read like legal briefs for humanity itself. He spoke of rights that "make up citizenship": the right to property, to education, to personal liberty, to representation in government, to hold office under the state. But he went further, documenting how the denial of these rights created a cascade of consequences: forced labor, economic exploitation, social humiliation, and psychological devastation.

"So rigorous is the enforcement of the social code against the Depressed Classes that any attempt on the part of the Depressed Classes to exercise their elementary rights of citizenship only ends in provoking the majority to practice the worst form of social tyranny known to history."

These weren't abstract arguments. Ambedkar backed them with data—incidents of violence, patterns of exclusion, statistical evidence of educational and economic deprivation. When he spoke at the Round Table Conferences in London, he carried with him not just the hopes of millions but their documented suffering.

The Poona Pact: A Turning Point

The confrontation between Gandhi and Ambedkar over separate electorates for the Depressed Classes remains one of the most dramatic episodes in India's freedom struggle. When the British government's Communal Award granted separate electorates to untouchables, Gandhi, imprisoned in Yerwada jail, began a fast unto death. He saw separate electorates as dividing Hindu society; Ambedkar saw them as the only guarantee of genuine representation.

The negotiations that followed were not between equals. On one side was Gandhi, whose life hung in the balance, backed by the emotional weight of a nation. On the other was Ambedkar, carrying the aspirations of millions who had no other voice. The Poona Pact that emerged was a compromise: joint electorates with reserved seats. But embedded in this agreement was something more—a promise that there would be "no disabilities attaching to anyone on the ground of being a member of the Depressed Classes in regard to any appointment to public services."

This promise would take a decade to materialize. When Ambedkar wrote to Viceroy Linlithgow reminding him of this commitment, he wasn't merely seeking jobs for his community. He was demanding that the state recognize its obligation to undo centuries of exclusion through concrete action.

Building the Foundation: The Importance of Data

One of the least celebrated but most crucial aspects of the reservation system was the systematic collection of data. The Starte Committee, appointed by the Government of Bombay to study the conditions of Depressed Classes and Aboriginal Tribes, didn't merely compile statistics. It created a methodology for understanding discrimination.

The committee's questionnaires were comprehensive, almost anthropological in their detail. They asked about access to wells, temples, schools, and markets. They documented which castes could sit in the presence of others, who could draw water from common sources, whose children could attend schools, and whose shadows were considered polluting. This wasn't an academic exercise—it was forensic documentation of apartheid.

The committee's findings painted a picture of systematic exclusion so complete that it challenged comfortable assumptions about Indian society. The untouchables weren't merely poor—they were denied the right to escape poverty. They weren't merely uneducated—they were barred from schools. They weren't merely laborers—they were trapped in hereditary occupations through social sanction and economic compulsion.

For the Aboriginal Tribes, the committee found a different pattern of exclusion. While they didn't face the ritual pollution that plagued untouchables, their geographical isolation had been weaponized against them. Their lands were taken, their forests restricted, their traditional economies disrupted, all while being denied access to modern education and employment.

Independence and Constitutional Promises

When India's Constituent Assembly convened, it faced a fundamental question: Would independent India perpetuate the inequalities of the past or actively work to dismantle them? The debates that followed weren't merely about policy—they were about the moral architecture of the new nation.

Dr. Ambedkar, as chairman of the drafting committee, embedded provisions for affirmative action deep within the constitutional framework. Article 16(4), which allows for reservation in public employment, wasn't drafted as an exception to equality—it was conceived as a mechanism to achieve it. The language was carefully chosen: the state could make provisions for "any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented."

It was a recognition that in a society stratified by millennia of discrimination, formal equality would only perpetuate real inequality. The Constitution didn't merely permit affirmative action—it made it a tool for transformation.

The Long Struggle for OBC Recognition

While Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes received immediate constitutional recognition, the Other Backward Classes faced a more tortuous path. These communities—neither untouchable nor tribal, but still excluded from opportunity—occupied an ambiguous space in the social hierarchy. They were above the pollution line but below the threshold of privilege.

Ambedkar had foreseen this challenge. Article 340 empowered the President to appoint a commission to investigate the conditions of "socially and educationally backward classes." But this provision remained dormant. When the Kaka Kalelkar Commission was finally appointed, its report was neither accepted nor properly debated. The Mandal Commission, established decades later, would face similar resistance. Its recommendation of twenty-seven percent reservation for OBCs would remain unimplemented for another decade, until V.P. Singh's government finally acted on it, triggering protests that revealed how deeply entrenched upper-caste privilege remained.

The Supreme Court's intervention in the Indra Sawhney case didn't merely uphold OBC reservations—it articulated a philosophy of substantive equality. The court recognized that centuries of discrimination had created disparities that wouldn't disappear through good intentions alone. Active intervention was not just permissible but necessary.

Understanding the Distinctions

The reservation system recognizes that different communities faced different forms of exclusion, requiring different remedies. The Scheduled Castes faced what the Starte Committee called "untouchability and unapproachability"—a form of social death that denied not just opportunity but humanity itself. Every aspect of their existence was regulated by pollution rules that made normal social interaction impossible. They couldn't use common wells, enter temples, sit with others, or even allow their shadows to fall on the privileged. This wasn't poverty—it was engineered dehumanization.

The Scheduled Tribes faced a different tragedy. Their crime wasn't ritual impurity but simply existing on lands that others coveted. Their forests were nationalized, their shifting cultivation criminalized, their languages ignored, their children sent to schools that taught them to be ashamed of their heritage. If the Scheduled Castes were excluded from society, the Scheduled Tribes had society imposed upon them.

The Other Backward Classes occupied a middle space—denied education and restricted in occupation but not subjected to untouchability. They could own land (after historical restrictions were lifted) and practice trades, but the upper echelons of learning and administration remained closed to them. Their exclusion was less visible but no less real.

The Evolution Continues

The reservation system hasn't remained frozen. Each generation has expanded its scope, responding to new understandings of discrimination. Educational institutions were included through constitutional amendment. Promotional opportunities were protected when courts threatened to restrict them. Private schools were required to reserve seats for disadvantaged children. Women, facing the double discrimination of gender and often caste, finally received reservation in legislative bodies.

The recent Supreme Court decision allowing sub-categorization within reserved categories recognizes another reality: that even within marginalized communities, some are more marginalized than others. This isn't fragmentation—it's refinement, ensuring that reservation reaches those who need it most.

Conclusion: An Unfinished Journey

The story of India's reservation system is far from over. It remains contested, debated, sometimes resented, often misunderstood. Critics see it as perpetuating

divisions; supporters see it as essential for healing them. What cannot be denied is its transformative impact. Millions who would have remained trapped in hereditary occupations have entered professions their ancestors couldn't have imagined. Villages that never sent a child to school now produce doctors and engineers. Communities that were voiceless now speak in Parliament.

Yet the journey remains unfinished. Representation in services hasn't automatically translated to social acceptance. Economic mobility hasn't erased social stigma. Political power hasn't eliminated everyday discrimination. The reservation system was never meant to be a complete solution—it was conceived as a beginning, a necessary disruption of inherited hierarchies.

As India continues to evolve, so too must its mechanisms for ensuring justice. The principles that Phule articulated, that Shahu Maharaj implemented, that Ambedkar constitutionalized, remain relevant because the inequalities they sought to address, while diminished, haven't disappeared. The reservation system stands as a reminder that justice isn't achieved through proclamation but through persistent, systematic effort to dismantle structures of exclusion and build pathways to dignity.

This history teaches us that social transformation doesn't happen through good intentions alone. It requires data to document discrimination, courage to confront it, wisdom to design remedies, and persistence to implement them despite resistance. Most importantly, it requires recognition that in a society marked by historical injustice, equality isn't achieved by treating everyone the same—it's achieved by acknowledging difference and actively working to eliminate its consequences.

The evolution of caste-based reservations in India is ultimately a testament to the idea that societies can change, that inherited hierarchies aren't eternal, and that constitutional democracy can be a tool for revolutionary transformation. It's an unfinished revolution, but one that continues to unfold, shaped by each generation's understanding of justice and commitment to achieving it.

MEASURING BACKWARDNESS IN ERSTWHILE ANDHRA PRADESH

India's pursuit of social justice for marginalized communities has been guided by evolving frameworks to identify and address "backwardness." From colonial-era political pacts to constitutionally mandated commissions, landmark court rulings, scholarly critiques, and large-scale state surveys, this journey reflects India's complex social fabric and commitment to inclusive governance.

Measuring Backwardness in Hyderabad State under the Nizams

The princely state of Hyderabad under Nizam rule was a distinctive socio-political formation, where caste hierarchies intersected with feudal land relations and localized governance systems. Unlike British India, which used systematic caste enumeration to shape policy, Hyderabad State developed its own mechanisms of social classification. Yet, the absence of a formal caste census did not imply the absence of caste—rather, caste operated through embedded hierarchies in land ownership, revenue collection, and labor practices.

Backwardness in Hyderabad was structured through deeply entrenched caste-feudal systems such as vetti (forced unpaid labor), jeetham (bonded labor), and jogini servitude, particularly imposed on Dalit communities like Malas, Madigas, and Chambhars[2]. These practices endured well into the 20th century under dominant peasant castes who controlled land and village administration.

Tribal and nomadic groups like the Gonds, Kolams, Lambadas, and Chenchus, particularly in districts such as Adilabad and Warangal, also experienced social and economic exclusion. Their marginalization was shaped by exploitative labor extraction and limited access to public institutions.

Amidst these oppressive conditions, Bhagyareddy Varma led one of the earliest caste dignity movements in princely India. Through the Jagan Mitra Mandali (1906)[3] and the Adi Hindu Social Service League (1922), Varma mobilized Dalits around self-respect, education, and anti-untouchability. He advanced the term Adi Hindu to assert historical dignity and used forms like Harikatha to spread political consciousness. His advocacy laid the groundwork for anti-caste reform in the region.

2 Bhukya, Bhangya. Being Dalit, Being Modern
3 Varma, Bhagyareddy. Jagan Mitra Patrika

From the late 19th century, the Nizam's administration—especially under Mir Osman Ali Khan—expanded public education and established institutions such as Osmania University. Though Urdu-medium schooling and elite control limited access, Dalits began to benefit from reserved scholarships, hostels, and separate schools—186 Depressed Class schools by 1945[4]. In 1931, due to sustained pressure from Dalit leaders like Varma and Arigay Ramaswamy[5] Dalits were officially recognized as Adi Hindus. That same decade witnessed a landmark in political inclusion with the appointment of Arigay Ramaswamy, a Dalit municipal councillor in Hyderabad city, one of the earliest examples of Dalit urban representation under princely rule.

The state's acknowledgment of structural disadvantage led to the creation of the Depressed Classes Trust Board in the 1940s, with representation from Dalit leaders and an annual budget exceeding Rs. 2.5 crore. The Board funded hostels, schools, scholarships, and welfare services targeting Dalit communities historically subject to caste-based exclusion.

Hyderabad's classification of backwardness diverged from British India's caste census model. It was shaped by community-led advocacy, pragmatic governance, and educational access data—such as school enrollments and hostel admissions. This lived, experience-based recognition of exclusion guided the allocation of state benefits and formal identification as Depressed Classes.

Rules and Early Affirmative Action

A foundational mechanism of local preference in Hyderabad was the Mulki Rules (1919)[6], which required 15 years of continuous residence to qualify for state employment or higher education. Though caste was not mentioned, these rules served as a form of early affirmative action for local backward castes and non-elite Muslims, protecting them from North Indian bureaucratic dominance. The Mulki framework prefigured region-based reservation policies that would later emerge in Telangana post-independence.

In summary, Hyderabad's approach to identifying backwardness was rooted in practice-driven indicators—such as forced labor, landlessness, social exclusion, and educational denial. Reformers like Bhagyareddy Varma effectively utilized emerging institutional spaces to advance caste equity, paving the way for later reservation debates in Telangana and shaping a unique non-census-based tradition of social justice.

4 Report on Depressed Class Hostels and Educational Grants, 1945.
5 Ramaswamy, Arigay. Memorandum to the Nizam's Education Department, 1931
6 Mulki Rules, Hyderabad State (1919)

State-Level Intervention: Regional Nuance in Practice

Across India's federated structure, individual states have exercised constitutional autonomy to refine backwardness identification and welfare measures, tailoring national frameworks to regional socio-cultural contexts.

One of the most notable exceptions to judicial limits on reservations has been the case of Tamil Nadu. In response to the 50% cap imposed by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney judgment (1992), Tamil Nadu passed legislation in 1993[7] ensuring 69% reservation in educational institutions and public employment. To protect this law from judicial review, it was placed under the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution through the 76th Constitutional Amendment. Although laws in the Ninth Schedule were originally protected from judicial scrutiny, the Supreme Court's I.R. Coelho judgment (2007)[8] later ruled that even such laws can be reviewed if they violate the basic structure of the Constitution. Nonetheless, Tamil Nadu's inclusion under the Ninth Schedule has enabled it to continue a higher reservation quota than the national ceiling, setting a precedent that has been cited in debates across other states, including Telangana.

Significant events and reforms followed the Mandal Commission recommendations. In 1979, the commission was constituted; its report was submitted in 1980. In 1990, Prime Minister V.P. Singh announced its implementation, leading to the largest expansion of reservation policy since independence. In 2006, the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act[9] extended 27% OBC reservations to centrally funded universities. These events each triggered public movements, policy shifts, and legal scrutiny, reshaping the scope of affirmative action. The post-independence period also witnessed the rise of legal and constitutional frameworks governing reservations. Articles 15(4), 16(4), and later 340 of the Indian Constitution provided the basis for classifying backward groups and granting them access to affirmative action in education and employment. Yet, this constitutional intent met repeated judicial scrutiny. In the 1992 Indra Sawhney vs. Union of India case, the Supreme Court upheld the Mandal Commission's 27% reservation for OBCs but imposed a 50% cap on total reservations, barring extraordinary circumstances. It also ruled that economic criteria alone could not define backwardness, rejecting the idea of purely economic affirmative action. However, exceptions such as the EWS (Economically Weaker Sections) reservation introduced through the 103rd Constitutional Amendment in 2019[10] challenged this framework by enabling 10% reservations for upper castes based on economic

7 Constitution (Seventy-Sixth Amendment) Act, 1994
8 I.R. Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu, (2007) 2 SCC 1
9 Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006
10 Constitution (One Hundred and Third Amendment) Act, 2019

criteria alone. This move has sparked ongoing legal and constitutional debate, raising concerns over equity and the dilution of caste-based justice mechanisms.

Post-independence, the articulation of backwardness became a major axis of political mobilization. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed widespread agitations led by backward caste associations, particularly in northern India. Movements such as the Yadav, Kurmi, and Koeri mobilizations in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh gained momentum, demanding implementation of OBC reservations. The decision to implement the Mandal Commission's recommendations in 1990 by Prime Minister V.P. Singh provoked both support and resistance. Pro-Mandal student movements emerged in rural and semi-urban areas, while anti-Mandal protests dominated university campuses and urban centers, illustrating the deep contestation around caste-based affirmative action.The period following India's independence also witnessed significant public and political mobilization around social justice and backward class representation. From the 1950s through the 1990s, backward class movements gained ground in several states—including Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Maharashtra—demanding proportional representation and recognition in education, jobs, and governance. The implementation of Mandal Commission recommendations in 1990 led to massive protests and counter-movements, reflecting deep societal divisions over affirmative action policies. At the same time, student and civil rights organizations formed powerful coalitions advocating for the rights of marginalized communities, pressuring political parties to expand welfare and reservation policies.

Post-Merger Policies in Unified Andhra Pradesh (1956–2014)

The creation of the Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Commission in 1970 was followed by multiple reforms. In 1982, the Justice Ramachandra Raju Commission recommended sub-categorization, leading to internal quotas for BC-A to D. The BC-E category for Muslims was introduced in 1994[11], following political mobilizations and state-level recommendations. In 2007, the Supreme Court stayed the 4% reservation for Muslims, and later upheld it only conditionally. Throughout the 2000s, various court cases and government orders prompted revisions of the BC list. These events reflect the iterative and contested process by which backwardness classification evolved in response to social pressure and legal mandates. The implementation of reservations in unified Andhra Pradesh also drew legal interventions. While the four-fold BC classification aimed to balance representation, several petitions were filed in courts questioning the rationale and periodicity of list revisions. Judicial directions emphasized the need for data-based revisions, prompting the state to periodically set up commissions. The

11 Reports of the Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Commission(1982)

Andhra Pradesh High Court and Supreme Court, in multiple rulings, underscored the requirement for objective, measurable indicators in classifying communities as backward. Meanwhile, the categorization of Muslims under BC-E[12] and the Madiga demand for SC sub-categorization (which reached the Supreme Court) illustrate how state policies operated within judicially contested spaces. These legal dynamics have deeply shaped the architecture of reservation in Andhra Pradesh and now Telangana.

In unified Andhra Pradesh, the assertion of backward communities intensified through movements such as the Backward Castes Welfare Associations and student unions advocating for the implementation of Mandal recommendations. Regional movements, such as those by the Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS), called for sub-categorization within SC reservations. Dalit and BC intellectual forums also gained traction, demanding proportional representation and challenging the dominance of upper castes in administration and education. These movements influenced both political discourse and policy design in the state. The formation of Andhra Pradesh catalyzed new forms of social and political movements centered around backward class rights. The 1960s and 1970s saw intense advocacy from BC welfare associations, caste federations, and regional student unions demanding quota implementation and caste-based enumeration. These movements often intersected with broader struggles for land reform, access to education, and employment. Protests and agitations occasionally led to official inquiries and revisions of the BC list. These political pressures shaped the state's approach to sub-categorization and periodic revision of beneficiary groups.

Following the 1956 merger of Hyderabad with Andhra to form Andhra Pradesh, the state took structured steps to classify and support backward classes. The Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Commission was constituted, and various socio-economic surveys were carried out. Over time, the state developed a four-fold categorization of BCs—BC-A, BC-B, BC-C, and BC-D—based on internal differences in historical disadvantage, social exclusion, and economic need.

- **BC-A** included the most socially and educationally disadvantaged castes with minimal representation in public services.
- **BC-B** comprised relatively better-off OBC communities who still exhibited educational and occupational backwardness.
- **BC-C** was primarily assigned to backward caste Christians and other religious minorities.

12 Reports of the Andhra Pradesh Minorities Commission(1993)

- **BC-D** encompassed non-Muslim occupational communities that were socially and educationally backward.
- Later, **BC-E** was introduced for backward sections among Muslims based on recommendations by the A.P. Minorities Commission and state commissions, though it faced judicial scrutiny for lack of constitutional clarity. In the 1990s, certain Muslim communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were classified under the Backward Classes (BC) category after demands for recognition by disadvantaged Muslim groups. The A.P. The Minorities Commission and Anwarul Huda Committee[13] found that non-Ashraf (Pasmanda) Muslims faced socio-economic conditions similar to or worse than OBCs. This led to a 4% reservation in jobs and education for 14 identified Muslim communities. The 2006 Sachar Committee[14] reinforced these findings, highlighting caste-like exclusions within Muslim society. These insights informed the 2007 Andhra Pradesh Reservation Act[15], which based the classification on socio-economic evidence, not religious identity.

This classification enabled targeted reservations within the broader OBC category and was accompanied by sub-quotas and distinct scheme allocations. Commissions recommended that this internal stratification be regularly reviewed to prevent domination by upwardly mobile sub-groups. These categories were also used to guide policies in education, housing, and welfare schemes, and remain a critical administrative framework for caste-based inclusion in both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.—BC-A, BC-B, BC-C, and BC-D—based on internal differences in status and need.

The state adopted both qualitative field surveys and quantitative socio-economic profiling to revise its BC lists. While caste remained a major criterion, other factors like occupational immobility, female literacy, and access to public employment were also considered. The Justice Ramachandra Raju Commission and the earlier Justice Jagannatha Shetty Commission both influenced BC enumeration and reservation reforms.

District-specific surveys were occasionally conducted by the Department of Backward Classes Welfare and Education, but they lacked standardization and often failed to influence wider policy decisions. Nevertheless, Andhra Pradesh became a leader in OBC sub-categorization and established mechanisms for regular list revision, which Telangana inherited post-2014

13 Anwarul Huda Committee Report, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1994
14 Sachar, Rajindar et al. Report, 2006
15 Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Muslims Act, 2007

Learnings and Insights

The historical and institutional trajectory of measuring backwardness in India reveals several critical insights for public policy, social justice, and constitutional governance. This evolving framework—shaped by reformers, colonial administrators, post-independence commissions, and contemporary surveys—underscores both the complexity of caste and community-based deprivation and the ingenuity of region-specific approaches.

- Caste Is Necessary But Not Sufficient:

  While caste remains a foundational axis of historical exclusion in India, both the Kalelkar and Mandal Commissions argued that it must be complemented with indicators of social, educational, and economic disadvantage. This is evident in Andhra Pradesh's creation of sub-categories (BC-A to BC-E), which account for internal variation within the OBC category.

- Empirical Grounding Is Essential:

  The failure of the Kalelkar Commission and the success of Mandal reflect a critical lesson: backwardness classifications must be based on field-based evidence, survey data, and quantifiable metrics. The Sachar Committee's influence further demonstrates how structured data can legitimize claims to policy inclusion.

- Regional Context Shapes Frameworks:

  The Hyderabad experience shows that backwardness can be recognized outside formal census systems. Through practices like vetti, bonded labor, exclusion from education, and political representation of Dalits, the Nizam-era state developed a lived framework for recognizing marginality. Telangana's adoption of Mulki-inspired domicile rules and SEEEPC surveys builds on this legacy.

- Sub-Categorization Enables Equity:

  States that adopted internal OBC differentiation—like Andhra Pradesh—prevented the monopolization of reservation benefits by relatively advanced castes within the category. Sub-categorization remains a necessary tool for equitable distribution.

- Backwardness Is Not Caste-Bound Alone:

  The extension of reservation benefits to backward Muslim groups through BC-E and the validation provided by the Sachar Committee reflect a broader truth: social disadvantage intersects with religion, region, and occupation. Policies must be capacious enough to account for these intersections.

- Judicial Oversight and Constitutional Strategies:

  Court rulings from Indra Sawhney to EWS debates have played a central role in reinforcing data-driven and constitutionally valid frameworks. They protect against political expediency while preserving the spirit of affirmative action. The experience of Tamil Nadu further demonstrates how federal mechanisms can be used to uphold state-specific reservation models. By placing its 69% reservation policy in the Ninth Schedule through the 76th Constitutional Amendment (1994), the state effectively shielded it from judicial review—affirming the value of strategic constitutional innovation.

- Social Movements and Mass Mobilisations Matter:

  Transformative change in backwardness recognition has often been the result of sustained political mobilization. From the early 20th-century efforts of reformers like Phule and Ambedkar to the more recent MRPS movement for SC classification, social movements have consistently shaped the agenda for inclusion. These mobilizations not only pressurized state institutions but also redefined public discourse on dignity, access, and representation.

- Community Assertion Drives Policy Change:

  From the Justice Party to Bhagyareddy Varma's Adi Hindu movement to Pasmanda Muslim mobilizations, grassroots assertion has been key in pushing the state toward structural reform. Public recognition often follows political articulation.

- Periodic Review and Disaggregation Are Vital:

  Backwardness is dynamic. Periodic socio-economic surveys and community-wise disaggregated data are essential to refine policy and keep it responsive to current realities.

- Constitution as Living Document:

  India's reservation framework is not frozen in time. Through commissions, state laws, and constitutional amendments, the nation has continuously adapted its understanding of who is backward and how that status should be addressed.

  In sum, India's history of measuring backwardness reveals the evolution of a complex, contested, and necessary project—one that continues to adapt through empirical innovation, constitutional vigilance, and democratic demand.

COMPOSITE BACKWARDNESS INDEX (CBI)

Introduction

The Telangana SEEEPC Survey 2024 was undertaken with the core objective of identifying and analyzing disparities in living conditions, achievements, and access to opportunities across castes. The survey generated a rich dataset spanning 75 distinct fields of information, offering deep insights into the social, educational, and economic realities of various communities.

However, to objectively assess relative backwardness, the data needed to be scientifically filtered and interpreted. From the 75 fields, 42 parameters were selected based on a rigorous evaluation of their statistical significance and sociological relevance. Only those indicators that clearly revealed structural inequalities or consistently differentiated communities in meaningful ways were included. The detailed statistical methodology adopted to test for statistical significance of each parameter is outlined in APPENDIX 7: STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY TO DETERMINE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARAMETERS

These 42 parameters—covering areas such as education, occupation, asset ownership, living standards, and access to services—offer a multidimensional view of deprivation. For instance, parameters such as child labour, female education, land ownership, reliance on daily wages, access to institutional credit reflect deep-rooted systemic disadvantages and were therefore retained.

On the other hand, certain fields, although sociologically significant, were excluded due to their statistical insignificance at the state level. A good example is the migration-related data. While family members working in other states or countries may indicate aspiration or economic mobility, the proportion of such families was around 0.8% of Telangana's total households. This made it statistically insignificant in distinguishing backwardness across the broader population. Hence, while useful for policy insights, it was not retained as a metric of relative backwardness.

However, the gender-ratio which has very little statistical variance across 242 castes, happens to be a sociologically significant parameter to determine gender backwardness of social groups. Hence, it is still retained as a parameter in the model to compute CBI to measure relative backwardness.

In short, the 42 chosen parameters represent a balanced intersection of empirical relevance and sociological depth, making them suitable for assessing the relative backwardness of communities across the state. While this is the case, it doesn't imply that the remaining parameters are irrelevant. Many fields of information such as beneficiaries of government schemes, reservation benefits etc which may not directly indicate the extent of backwardness, can certainly be extremely useful in informing the Telangana government's policies and for various academic research endeavours in understanding Telangana.

And therefore, to holistically assess the socio-economic status of all the castes in Telangana using these 42 parameters of sociological and statistical importance, the concept of a Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) has been developed. It offers a systematic approach to quantifying and understanding the extent of relative backwardness across castes.

This index is designed to provide a more comprehensive and data-driven picture of backwardness by incorporating these 42 parameters across eight broad categories:

Table 3: Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) 42 Indicators

(Green indicator = higher %->less backward; Red indicator = higher %->more backward)

Discrimination (2)	Inter-caste Marriage	Discrimination Place of Worship							
Women/Girls (3)	Gender Ratio	Child Marriage (Female)	Women below 10th						
Education (8)	School Dropout	Illiterate Children	Primary or below	Upto Intermediate	Diploma or above	State govt school	Pvt school	English Medium	
Occupation (9)	Daily Wage Workers	Child Labour	Informal/Street Vendors/Contractors	NREGA Worker	Agri Labour	Continuing Traditional Occupation	Govt Jobs (professional)	Pvt Jobs (professional)	Own medium/large biz
Income (4)	Annual Income < 1 lac	1 - 5 lacs	5 - 50 lacs	Income Tax payer					
Land & Movable Assets (8)	HH with land	HH with irrigated land	Avg irrigated land per HH	Own land <5acre	Own land 5 - 20 acre	Own land >20acre	HH with fridge	HH with car	
Living Conditions (6)	Share of Rural population	<=2 rooms in house	>3 rooms in house	No Toilets	No Electricity	No Tap Water			
Banking & Loan (2)	Marriage/Medical Loan	Money Lender Loan							

Parameters to Measure Backwardness

Table 4: CBI Parameters by Category

Category	Parameters (42)	Questions and Descriptions
Social Discrimination (2)	Discrimination in Places of Worship	Q) 56 Are the family members allowed to visit local Temples/ Mosques/ Churches /other worship places freely without any intimidation or discrimination? Yes/No (the proportion of individuals within a caste who report to have experienced discrimination from entering (or within) places of worship such as temples, mosques, churches etc.)
	Inter-caste marriages	Q) 55 Does any member of the family have inter-caste marriage? Yes/No (the incidence of inter-caste marriages of a caste.)
Women Empowerment (3)	Female to Male Ratio	Q) 4 Mention the gender of all household members. (the proportion of females within a caste)
	Female Child Marriage	Q) 14 Mention the marital status for all Household members. (the proportion of girls within a caste who are married and below age 18)
	Women with education below 10th grade	Q) 17 Mention the highest qualification of individuals. (the proportion of women within a caste whose highest qualification is not more than 10th standard)
Educational Attainment (7)	Illiteracy	Q) 17 Mention the highest qualification of individuals. (the percentage of illiterates within a caste)
	School Drop outs	Q) 16 If dropped-out from school, mention the class from which he/ she dropped out. the proportion of children (age <15) within a caste, dropping out of school
	Children up to Primary or below	Q) 17 Mention the highest qualification of individuals (the proportion of children (age <18) within a caste whose education is not beyond primary (class 7)
	Studied up to Intermediate (12th standard)	Q) 17 Mention the highest qualification of individuals (the proportion of children (age <18) within a caste whose education is not beyond primary (class 7)
	Attained Higher Education (Diploma & above)	Q) 17 Mention the highest qualification of individuals the proportion of individuals (age<30) within a caste whose highest qualification is diploma or above.
	Studied in Government Schools	Q) 17 Mention the type of School (the percentage of individuals within a caste who are studying/studied in state government schools.)

Category	Parameters (42)	Questions and Descriptions
Educational Attainment (7)	Studied in Private Schools	Q) 17 Mention the type of School (the percentage of individuals within a caste who are studying/studied into non-government or private schooling)
	English Medium Education	Q) 18 Mention the Medium of Highest Educational qualification the proportion of people (6-29) within a caste who have had an english medium schooling
Type of Occupation (9)	Daily Wage Workers	Q) 19 Mention the details of the present occupation the proportion of individuals between the age 21-65 within a caste, who work as daily wage workers.
	Child Labour	Q) 19 Mention the details of the present occupation the proportion of daily wage workers within a caste who are under 18 years of age.
	NREGA workers	Q) 23 If Column no. 19 is 'Daily wage worker' then provide the presently working un-organised sector details. the proportion of individuals between the age 21-65 within a caste who work as NREGA workers
	Agriculture labourers	Q) 23 If Column no. 19 is 'Daily wage worker' then provides the presently working unorganised sector details. (the proportion of individuals within a caste who are agriculture laborers.)
	Informal/Street Vendors	Q) 23 If Column no. 19 is 'Daily wage worker' the proportion of individuals within a community who are street vendors or have informal shops. (the proportion of individuals within a caste who are agriculture laborers.)
	Continuing in Traditional Occupation	Q) 25 If the household is continuing in traditional occupation write 01; if not, write 02.If the household is continuing in traditional occupation write 01; if not, write 02. (the proportion of individuals in a community who are continuing in their traditional occupation)
	Government Job	Q) 20 If Column No. 19 is 'Profession/ Employee' then provide details (the proportion of individuals within a caste who work as full-time government employees)
	Private Sector Job (Salaried)	Q) 20 If Column No. 19 is 'Profession/ Employee' then provide details (the proportion of individuals within a caste having a salaried job in the private sector)
	Own a large/medium business	Q) 20 If Column No. 19 is 'Profession/ Employee' then provide details (the proportion of individuals within a caste who own/run a medium-large business)

Category	Parameters (42)	Questions and Descriptions
Living Conditions (6)	Share of Rural Population	(the proportion of households within a caste living in a rural area)
	Number of Rooms <= 2	Q) 54(e) Mention the number of living rooms in the dwelling: (the proportion of households within a castes living in houses with 2 or less rooms)
	Number of Rooms >=3	Q) 54(e) Mention the number of living rooms in the dwelling: (the proportion of households within a castes living in houses with 3 or more rooms)
	No Toilets	Q) 54(i) Mention the details of the toilet in the house. Yes/No (the proportion of households within a caste without toilets)
	No Electricity	Q) 54(h) Mention the details of the electricity facility in the house. Yes/No (the proportion of households within a caste without electricity)
	No Tap Water in House	Q) 54(g) Mention the details of drinking water facilities: (the proportion of households within a community not having tap water for drinking)
Income (4)	<1 lakh annual income	Q) 27 Mention the Annual income as per the ranges given: (the proportion of individuals within a caste with annual income within the bracket of < 1 lakh)
	1-5 lakh annual income	Q) 27 Mention the Annual income as per the ranges given: (the proportion of individuals within a caste with annual income within the bracket of 1-5lakh)
	5-50 lakh annual income	Q) 27 Mention the Annual income as per the ranges given: (the proportion of individuals within a caste with annual income within the bracket of 5-50 lakh)
	Income Tax Payer	Q) 28 Are you paying Income Tax? Yes/No (the proportion of individuals within a caste who pay income tax)
Land Ownership (6)	Household with Land	Q) 30 Do you have your own land? Yes/No (the proportion of households within a caste having a land in their name)
	Household with Irrigated Land	Q) 36 Mention the details of Wet Land (in acres and guntas) (the proportion of households within a caste having irrigated land in their name)
	Average Irrigated Land per Household	Q) 36 Mention the details of Wet Land (in acres and guntas) (the average irrigated land holding per household in a caste)

Category	Parameters (42)	Questions and Descriptions
Land Ownership (6)	Own Land <5 acre	Q) 33-38 Mention the details of land (in acres and guntas) (the proportion of households within a caste having land not more than 5 acres in their name)
	Own Land 5-20 acre	Q) 33-38 Mention the details of land (in acres and guntas) (the proportion of households within a caste having land about 5-20 acres in their name)
	Own Land >20 acre	Q) 33-38 Mention the details of land (in acres and guntas) (the proportion of households within a caste having land more than 20 acres in their name.)
Movable Assets (2)	Refrigerator ownership	Q) 52 Mention the details of movable properties owned (the proportion of households within a caste who own a refrigerator.)
	Car ownership	Q) 52 Mention the details of movable properties owned (the proportion of households within a caste who own a car for personal use.)
Access to Institutional Credit (2)	Loan from Money Lender	Q) 48 (c) Mention the details from where the loan was obtained (the proportion of individuals within a caste who are dependent on loans from money lenders)
	Loan for Marriage and Medical expenditure	Q) 48 (b) If column No. 48(a) is Yes, mention the purpose of the loan (the proportion of individuals within a caste who are dependent on loans for marriages/medical expenditures)

Description of Parameters

1. Discrimination in Places of Worship

Historically, many marginalized communities were denied entry into temples and other religious spaces, symbolizing deep social segregation. The feeling of discrimination, real or otherwise, in access to places of worship is a powerful indicator of enduring caste-based exclusion. Measuring this today helps assess whether such exclusion still persists.

When households in the state of Telangana were asked if the family members were allowed to visit local worship places freely without any intimidation or discrimination?

6.4 lakh families i.e. 5.7% of total households said no– they weren't allowed to visit places of worship freely. Reported discrimination was more or less same across social groups with 3.9% of Scheduled Tribes (STs), 5% of Backward Classes (BCs), 5.3% of Scheduled Castes (SCs), 5.4% of General Castes (OCs) reporting intimidation/discrimination from entering in local places of worship.

2. Inter-caste Marriages

Higher incidence of inter-caste marriages in a family is a key indicator of social openness and integration. A low prevalence indicates rigid caste boundaries, social conservatism, and deeply rooted hierarchies that restrict individual choice. It reflects the persistence of caste-based norms in personal and familial decisions. Measuring this helps assess how far a society has moved toward equality, inclusion, and breaking down historical barriers of caste.

When households in the state were asked if any member of the family had had inter-caste marriage?

6.27 lakh families i.e. 5.6% of total households reported to have a family member who has had an inter-caste marriage. This reflects the fact that an overwhelming 95% of families in Telangana continue to marry within their castes/communities.

5.8% of General Castes (OCs) households reported inter-caste marriages, which is almost twice that of 3.2% of Scheduled Tribes (STs). While among Backward Classes (BCs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs), the incidence of inter-caste marriages was 4.7% and 4.9% respectively.

3. Female to Male Ratio

In Telangana, the average female-to-male ratio stands at 0.98. A skewed female-to-male ratio is a telling indicator of gender-based discrimination, often reflecting practices like female feticide, neglect of girl children, and unequal access to nutrition or healthcare.

Among the social groups, it is 0.96 of Scheduled Tribes (STs), 0.97 of General Castes (OCs), 0.98 of Backward Classes (BCs), 1.01 of Scheduled Castes (SCs). Interestingly, General Castes (OCs) have a female to male ratio that is less than the state average. Monitoring this ratio helps identify systemic gender bias and the extent of inequality within caste groups, which can thus potentially be a signifier of relative backwardness.

4. Female Child Marriage

High rates of female child marriage reflect a combination of cultural backwardness and socio-economic vulnerability. This points to persistent gender inequality, lack of awareness, and poverty-driven decisions that compromise girls' education, health, and autonomy. This practice perpetuates intergenerational disadvantage and is a critical marker of both social oppression and developmental deprivation within a community.

When the marital status of household members was asked, an astonishing 2.16 lakh i.e. ~ 5% of girls below the age of 18 were found to be married. The highest share of married girls below 18 were among Backward Classes (BCs) at 4.6%, followed by General Castes (OCs) at 4.4% and Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 4%. The least Girl Child Marriages were among Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 3.8%

5. Women Studied Below 10th

Low educational attainment among women is a key indicator of gender inequality. It reflects barriers such as early marriage, household responsibilities, limited mobility, and lack of support for girls' education. This not only restricts women's access to employment and decision-making but also affects the well-being and future prospects of the entire family making it a vital parameter of backwardness.

On the question of highest qualification, about two-thirds (65.5%) of women in Telangana were found to have not studied beyond the 10th standard. The highest share was among Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 72.3%, while the least share was that of General Castes (OCs) at 55%. Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Backward Classes (BCs) had almost their shares close to the state average at 66.5% and 67.1% respectively

6. Illiterate Children

A higher share of illiterate children is a core sign of educational backwardness. Without basic literacy, young people are locked out of future learning, decent jobs, and informed civic participation, reinforcing the cycle of poverty.

As part of the question on highest qualification/details of education attainment, 3.71 lakh or 4 % of those below 18 were found to be illiterate. The share of illiteracy was lowest among Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 3.3%, while Backward Classes (BC), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and General Castes (OCs) had more or less the same at 3.7%, 3.6% and 3.7% respectively.

7. School Dropouts

School dropouts indicate a critical disruption in the educational journey, usually caused by poverty, child labor, early marriage, or inadequate institutional support. When children leave school during formative years, it limits their ability to access skilled employment, better incomes, and healthier lives.

On the question of school drop-outs an average of 2.2% i.e. 7.75 lakh individuals in Telangana were found to have been school drop-outs. School dropouts were found to be about the same among all four social groups with Scheduled Castes (SCs) and General Castes (OCs) at 2.1%, Backward Classes (BCs) at 2.2% and Scheduled Tribes at (2.4%).

8. Studied up to Primary (Class 1-7)

A higher share of children educated only up to Class 7 signals weak school retention, early learning gaps, and poor foundational education. This limits future academic progress and job readiness, making it a critical early indicator of educational backwardness. It is hence a negative parameter of backwardness.

On the question of highest education qualification, 38.4% of children under 18 have studied only up to primary (Class 1-7). While the highest share were that of Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 40.5%, the least share was that of General Castes (OCs) at 24.6% followed by Backward Classes (BCs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs), which were about the same as state average at 38.7% and 38.6%.

9. Studied up to Intermediate (12th standard)

A high proportion of people who have not studied beyond Class 12 indicates limited access to higher education and restricted entry into skilled or professional sectors. It reflects systemic educational disadvantages and reinforces dependence on low-paying, low-skilled jobs.

In Telangana, 56.4% of individuals below the age 18 have not studied beyond the 12th standard. Over 62.7% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 56.7% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) under age 18, completed only up to intermediate education, higher than OCs at 45.9%. BCs are at 57.7%. This suggests most disadvantaged groups remain trapped at pre-graduation levels, limiting their access to white-collar or skilled jobs.

10. Attained Diploma or Above

A low proportion of individuals holding a diploma or higher qualification signals limited access to technical education and skill development, which restricts entry into skilled, well-paying jobs. This indicator reflects the quality and progression of educational attainment within a community.

In Telangana, over one-third (36.3%) of individuals below age 30 have achieved diploma-level education or above. Only 28.4% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 34.4% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) have attained a diploma or higher qualification, compared to a high 59.0% of General Castes (OCs).

Backward Classes (BCs) stood around the state average at 36.5%, also far below the General Castes. This highlights a substantial gap in access to higher education, which directly impacts career opportunities, income levels, and social mobility for marginalized communities.

11. Studied in State Government Schools

A higher proportion of education in government schools shows dependency on government schools which are often modest in the quality of teaching and infrastructure. However it is not to suggest that children moving away from government schools is a desirable outcome, rather it is to identify a lack of affordability to avail higher quality education in the current socio-economic context.

When members of households were asked about their 'type of school', 41.3% said they come from state government schools indicating constrained private alternatives. About one-third (32.4%) of General Castes (OCs) say that they have studied/studied in state government schools.

On the other hand, close to half of Scheduled Castes (SCs) (49.1%), said they belong to government schools, exposing a stark contrast between General Castes (OC) having way better access to private or alternative schooling options. The share of Backward Classes (BCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) was a little over average at 45.4% and 43.6%, respectively.

12. Studied in Private Schools

Enrollment in private schools is often associated with better resources, infrastructure, and perceived educational outcomes. A low share of private school attendance may indicate economic hardship or dependence on under-resourced public institutions, highlighting limited parental agency in choosing educational pathways. It is hence a positive parameter of backwardness.

As part of the question on their type of school, 19.3% of individuals said they study/studied in a non-government/private school. Private school education was found to be highest among General Castes (OCs) at 30%, over three times that of Scheduled Castes (SCs) (9.6%) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (7.8%). Backward Classes (BCs) share in access to private schools was slightly below the state average at 17.3%.

This gap underscores the financial and educational privilege that allows General Castes to opt for costly, perceived-better private schooling.

13. English Medium Education

Low enrollment in English medium education highlights a gap in access to globally competitive learning. English proficiency is increasingly linked with better employment prospects, social mobility, and participation in knowledge-based economies. This indicator reflects a community's preparedness for broader economic and professional integration.

In Telangana, 47.0% of individuals below age 30 said to have received English medium education. A little over half (56.6%) of General Castes (OCs) youth reported to have studied in English medium , indicating better future employability and social mobility than the average person in Telangana. For Scheduled Castes (SCs) (40.7%) and Backward Classes (48.1%), this figure is considerably lower, while Scheduled Tribes (STs) were at the bottom with just over one-third (36.6%) studying in english medium, exposing a significant language-based educational divide.

14. Daily Wage Workers

A high proportion of daily wage workers signals unstable employment, poor social security, and vulnerability to income shocks. It indicates limited access to formal sector jobs and skill-based occupations, making it a critical measure of economic precariousness and backwardness.

When the residents were asked as part to mention the details of the present occupation, 31.3% of respondents between the age of 21-65 reported to be daily wage workers. A staggering 45.7% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 40.6% of Scheduled Tribes are engaged in daily wage labour—precarious, low-paying work. Backward Classes (BCs) are lower at 32.1%, while General Castes (OCs) show a sharp contrast at only 10.9%.

This reflects caste-based occupational stratification, with disadvantaged groups trapped in informal daily wage manual labour.

15. Child Labour

As part of the question on the present occupation of the respondent, about 1% of those under age 18 i.e. 89,000 were found to be daily wage workers. Of these child labourers, 14% belonged to SC Madigas and 11% belonged to ST Lambadis, who formed the major share of communities engaged in daily wage work.

The prevalence of child labour remains a concern for Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 1.8% and Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 1.2%, compared to 0.2% among General Castes (OCs). Backward Classes (BCs) report 0.8%. This shows that vulnerable groups, especially Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, continue to rely on child labour This shows that the education system has failed to reach vulnerable groups especially Scheduled Tribes (STs) and scheduled Castes (SCs) driving them to child labourlikely driven lack of educational access.

The contrast underscores how backwardness can be entrenched where poverty, exclusion, and lack of opportunities intersect. Hence, child labour is a stark indicator of economic hardship and systemic failure to protect childhood. It signals

that families are forced to send their children to work for want of education,thus, perpetuating poverty and developmental deprivation.

16. Informal/Street Vendors

A high share of informal vendors within a community indicates heavy reliance on unregulated, low-income livelihoods. This reflects economic insecurity, absence of formal job access, and lack of state-supported protections like pensions or insurance—which can be considered as hallmarks of economic backwardness.

As part of the question on present occupation, on an average 4.7% of individuals said they were self-employed as small street vendors or by running informal shops such kirana, stationery, food stalls etc;

The highest were among Backward Classes (BCs) at 5.7%, followed by General Castes (OCs) at 3.9%, Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 3.5% and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 2.8%. The disparity suggests varying degrees of exposure to informal economies, with some communities far more vulnerable to economic shocks than others.

17. NREGA Workers

High dependence on NREGA employment signals chronic rural underemployment and lack of stable income sources. As a last-resort wage employment scheme, it is typically accessed by those with no other livelihood options. This reliance reflects acute economic vulnerability, limited job opportunities, and structural poverty—making it a crucial indicator of backwardness in rural communities.

2.2 lakh i.e. on an average 1% of individuals between the age 21-65 reported to be working as NREGA workers. of the 2.2 lakh individuals who reported to be working as NREGA workers, close to 20% were from SC Madiga community and about 10% from BC-D Mudiraj.

Dependency on MGNREGA, a wage employment scheme for the rural poor, is marginal but slightly higher among Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 1.7% and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 1.2%, while Backward Classes (BCs) are at 1.0%. Only 0.3% of General Castes (OCs) rely on MGNREGA. The higher rates among SCs and STs point to persistent rural livelihood insecurity.

18. Agricultural Laborers

A high proportion of agricultural laborers indicates limited or no land ownership and heavy reliance on low-paying, seasonal work. This dependence highlights deep-rooted economic vulnerability and social marginalization within the rural economy.

It reflects a lack of assets, bargaining power, and upward mobility—making it a key indicator of backwardness. As part of the question on present occupation, the respondents were asked the details of the type of occupation if they reported to be daily wage workers.

In Telangana, 19.4% of individuals are engaged in agricultural labour work. A very high 32.9% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 31.7% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) work as agricultural labourers, compared to 18.5% of Backward Classes (BCs) and just 5.5% of General Castes (OCs). This stark difference reflects historic landlessness and economic marginalization, keeping SCs and STs at the lower end of the rural economy.

19. Continuing in Traditional Occupation

Continuing in traditional occupations may reflect cultural preservation, but when such work remains low-paying or caste-bound, it signals limited economic mobility and entrenched occupational hierarchies. It's a telling marker of both social and economic backwardness.

In Telangana, 6.8% of individuals reported continuing in their traditional occupations. Traditional caste-linked occupations are continued most among 10.4% of Backward Classes (BCs). While 3% Scheduled Castes (SCs), 2.0% of General Castes (OCs) and 1.1% of Scheduled Tribes (STs). report the same. This suggests that caste-based occupational stratification still persists for a small segment but predominantly among the BCs, affecting their socio-economic mobility.

20. Government Jobs

Higher share in government employees within a caste highlights barriers to education, access to competitive exams, equal opportunity and socio-political networks. Since government jobs are associated with income stability, social status, and long-term security, they serve as a strong indicator of upward mobility and institutional inclusion. It is hence a positive parameter of backwardness.

As part of the question on present occupation, the respondents were asked the details of the type of occupation if they reported to be professional/employee.

In response to this, 6.46 lakh i.e. 2.8% of individuals between 21-65 reported to be in government jobs. Only 2.4% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) have members in professional government jobs, reflecting restricted access to stable, prestigious public sector employment. Backward Classes (BCs)

fare slightly better at 2.3%, while General Castes (OCs) stand higher at 3.5%, indicating comparatively better representation in such secure occupations.

21. Private Sector Job

Low participation in private salaried jobs reflects limited access to formal education, employable skills, or urban labor networks. It may also signal social discrimination or occupational stagnation. This metric is essential to assess how communities are integrating into the modern economy.

As part of the question on present occupation, 7.4% of individuals between age 21-65 said working in the private sector as an employee. Access to professional private sector jobs—requiring higher education and skill levels—is lowest among Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 2.8%, followed by Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 5.6% and while Backward Classes (BCs) show moderate representation at 6.3%.

General Castes (OCs) record a significantly higher 14.8%, which is twice the state average and about 5 times STs, underlining a gap in private sector participation and employability skills between upper and lower social groups.

22. Own a Medium/Large Business

Ownership of medium or large enterprises (with turnover above ₹10 crores) is a strong indicator of capital accumulation, entrepreneurial capability, and upward class mobility. Low representation in this category signals limited access to credit, markets, and business networks—core enablers of economic advancement.

In Telangana, in effect there are only 5,302 owners of such businesses. Of this, 12% are owned by OC Komatis and BC-E Shaikh Muslims, followed by 7% by OC Reddys.

Ownership of medium or large businesses is rare across all social groups but most scarce is among Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 0.004% and Scheduled Castes (SCs) at just 0.01%, suggesting extremely limited entrepreneurial capital or access to markets. Backward Classes (BCs) stand at 0.02%, and General Castes (OCs) slightly better at 0.06%, though overall such business ownership remains minimal across the state.

23. Earning < ₹ 1 Lakh Annual Income

A high proportion of individuals earning below ₹1 lakh annually is a stark indicator of chronic poverty and economic insecurity. It reflects an inability to cover basic needs like food, healthcare, housing, and education, and severely limits social mobility.

When individuals in the state were asked to mention their annual income as per the ranges given, In Telangana, the state average of those earning less than ₹1 lakh annually stood at a substantial high of 78.2%. Further, 86.2% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 88.2% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) have an annual income below ₹1 lakh, highlighting widespread economic deprivation among SCs and STs. Backward Classes (BCs) also show high dependency on low income at 80.5%, whereas only half of General Castes (OCs) (56.2%) had less than 1 lakh income, indicating relatively higher income security and economic advantage among General Castes (OCs).

24. Earning ₹1-5 Lakh Annual Income

In Telangana, 17.4% of the population reported to be within the annual income range of ₹ 1-5 lakh. A mere 11.7% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 9.7% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) fall into this income bracket. Backward Classes (BCs) have 16.7%, suggesting a slightly better but still constrained economic position. General Castes (OCs) report a significantly higher 30.6%, which is thrice that of SCs and STs, showing their superior presence in middle-income economic segments compared to other groups.

A high proportion of individuals earning in the range of ₹1-5 lakh annually is a stark indicator of financial distress and economic insecurity. It reflects middle-income earners who have their basic necessities ensured but are still living on economic precarity.

25. Earning ₹5–50 Lakh Annual Income

In Telangana, only 4.4% of the population reported to be within the annual income range of ₹ 5-50 lakh. A mere 2.1% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) report annual incomes above ₹5 lakh, indicating minimal access to high-income opportunities in these communities. Backward Classes (BCs) stand slightly higher at 2.9%, whereas General Castes (OCs) show a significant advantage with 13.2% of households earning above ₹5 lakh annually. General Castes (OCs) in other words have 3 times higher share of those earning between ₹5-50 lakh than the state average and 5 times the lowest groups who are SCs and STs.

This income bracket signifies economic stability, savings capacity, and potential for upward mobility. A community's low representation here indicates limited wealth accumulation, underemployment, or barriers to high-paying opportunities. It is hence a positive parameter of backwardness.

26. Income Tax Payers

A low proportion of income tax payers indicates widespread low incomes or predominant reliance on informal, untaxed earnings. It also signals limited engagement with formal economic structures and less fiscal contribution. This measure acts as a proxy for economic formalization and financial inclusion. It is therefore a positive parameter of backwardness.

When individuals were asked if they pay income tax, only 10.3% of individuals said yes. Just 6.0% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 5.0% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) report paying income tax, reflecting lower taxable incomes and underrepresentation in formal, high-earning employment sectors. Backward Classes (BCs) fare somewhat better at 7.9%, but still far behind General Castes (OCs), where an overwhelming 23.5% are income tax payers. This disparity underscores the economic marginalization of SC, ST, and BC groups.

27. Households with Land

When households were asked about ownership of land, 35.6% in Telangana reported owning land. Among social groups, Scheduled Tribes (STs) had the highest ownership at 58.1%, followed by Backward Classes at 36.3%, Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 35.2%, and General Castes at 33.7%. This significant disparity, particularly higher ownership among STs, underscores the persistent structural inequalities in the distribution of agrarian assets. It also highlights land ownership as a critical indicator in assessing relative backwardness.

28. Households with Irrigated Land

Access to irrigated land is a critical determinant of agricultural productivity and income stability. It reduces reliance on erratic rainfall and enables year-round farming, directly impacting food security and rural prosperity. Communities without irrigation access face higher risks of crop failure and economic distress. This is a positive parameter.

In Telangana, 43% of households reported to have irrigated land. Scheduled Castes (SCs) have 43.4% of their land irrigated, slightly ahead of General Castes (OCs) at 44.0% and Backward Classes (BCs) at 45.9%. Scheduled Tribes (STs) lag at 32.9%, suggesting lesser access to water resources or irrigation infrastructure, which can severely impact their agricultural output and livelihood stability.

29. Average Irrigated Land per Household

The average size of irrigated land owned per household is a direct indicator of agricultural capacity, productivity, and potential income. Larger irrigated holdings allow for greater crop diversity and financial resilience, while smaller holdings may limit subsistence farming and economic advancement.

In Telangana, average irrigated land per household is 0.3 acres. Scheduled Castes (SCs) possess on average just 0.20 acres—indicative of severe land fragmentation or smallholdings. Scheduled Tribes (STs) fare similarly low at 0.25 acres. Backward Classes (BCs) and General Castes (OCs) hold more with 0.42 and 0.40 acres of irrigated land per household respectively. While these figures too reflect limited agricultural land per family, posing challenges for sustainable livelihood, this sharp disparity underscores significant inequalities in access to productive agrarian assets.

30. Own Land < 5 Acre

Small landholdings are a key marker of agrarian vulnerability, often linked with marginal farming, low productivity, and minimal surplus income. Such households face challenges in sustaining livelihoods and are more susceptible to climate and market fluctuations.

82.3% of households in Telangana reported owning less than 5 acres of land. A very high proportion of Scheduled Castes (SCs) (90.5%) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (80.1%) own less than 5 acres of land, indicating land poverty and limited agricultural potential. Backward Classes (BCs) also show a high share at 85.0%, while General Castes (OCs) fare comparatively better with 69.1%.

This highlights stark inequalities in land distribution, with historically disadvantaged communities overwhelmingly clustered among marginal landholders.

31. Own Land 5–20 Acre

Medium-sized landholdings indicate relative agrarian stability and greater income potential through improved crop diversification, productivity, and market access. This bracket potentially represents the rural middle class with modest but stable assets.

In Telangana, 15% of households own medium-sized landholdings (5–20 acres). This is particularly rare among Scheduled Castes (SCs) (7.0%) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (17.9%). Backward Classes (BCs) stand at 12.2%, whereas General Castes (OCs) show a significant advantage with 26.4%. This reinforces the structural land inequality between socially disadvantaged groups and OCs in Telangana.

This stark contrast reflects deep-seated disparities in land access and reinforces the pattern of historical marginalization in agrarian wealth.

32. Own Land > 20 Acre

Large landholdings signify substantial agrarian wealth, often correlating with social influence, political clout, and intergenerational capital. A community's presence in this category reflects its elite economic status within rural society. It is hence a positive parameter of backwardness.

4.5% of households in Telangana reported owning more than 20 acres. This is negligible among all groups, but particularly low for Scheduled Castes (SCs) (2.5%), Scheduled Tribes (STs) (2.0%), and Backward Classes (BCs) (2.9%). General Castes (OCs) again lead slightly at 4.4%.

While the overall proportion remains low across groups, this parameter still reflects better land control among OCs. This disparity highlights the unequal distribution of large-scale agrarian assets and the exclusion of certain castes from high-value land ownership.

33. Refrigerator Ownership

Refrigerator ownership reflects not just access to electricity and modern appliances, but also signals disposable income, improved food storage, and nutritional security. It serves as a strong proxy for a household's standard of living. It is hence a positive parameter of backwardness.

22.6% of households in Telangana reported owning a refrigerator. Only 15.7% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 17.7% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) own refrigerators, compared to 23.6% of Backward Classes (BCs) and a substantial 35.9% of General Castes (OCs).This steep gap highlights stark differences in living conditions and economic capability between the most and least privileged social groups.

34. Owning a Car

Car ownership is a clear marker of economic affluence, aspirational consumption, and access to mobility. It reflects disposable income, access to credit, and a lifestyle above basic subsistence. A low car ownership rate signals deeper economic limitations. It is hence a positive parameter of backwardness.

Only 3.2% of households reported owning a car. Car ownership is extremely limited among Scheduled Castes (SCs) (1.5%) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (1.6%), indicating low disposable income and mobility. Backward Classes (BCs) also report low ownership at 2.3%, while General Castes (OCs) fare much better at 9.2%, underscoring higher affluence and access to personal transport among OCs. This disparity underscores sharp economic stratification across caste and community lines.

35. Share of Rural Population

A high rural population share often indicates reliance on agriculture, limited access to urban infrastructure, and restricted exposure to modern employment opportunities. It also reflects lower access to services like healthcare, education, and transport—key indicators of development. Hence it is a negative parameter of backwardness.

In Telangana, 57.9% of the population lives in rural areas. However, a striking 88.4% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) reside in rural areas, showing their overwhelming dependence on village economies and lack of urban migration. Scheduled Castes (SCs) follow at 70.6%. Backward Classes (BCs) are slightly less rural at 58.2%. In contrast, only 39.7% of General Castes (OCs) live in rural areas, indicating greater urban presence, opportunity access, and economic diversification.

This highlights stark differences among urban access, which can influence overall social and economic opportunities.

36. House with 2 or lesser rooms

Living in a house with fewer than two rooms is a strong indicator of housing deprivation, overcrowding, and limited personal space. It reflects not just economic hardship, but also affects health, privacy, and children's ability to study or thrive in a conducive environment.

In Telangana, 63.5% of households in Telangana said their house had 2 or less rooms. Further, close to 3/4th of Scheduled Castes (SCs) (73.7%) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (75.5%) live in houses with less than 2 rooms, reflecting severe housing inadequacy and overcrowding. Backward Classes (BCs) are relatively better at 63.9%, but this is still high. In contrast, less than half (47.4%) of General Castes (OCs) face such cramped housing conditions, highlighting better living spaces.

37. House with 3 or more rooms

While living in 2 or lesser rooms signifies deprivation, living in 3 or more rooms signifies progress, advancement in comfort and a potentially higher wealth or income

In Telangana, 27.5% of households said they had a house with 3 or more rooms. The availability of spacious housing was significantly higher among General Castes (OCs) at 42.8%, compared to only 18.9% of Scheduled Castes (SCs), 17.6% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 28.5% of Backward Classes (BCs), suggesting that the share of General Castes who have distinctly superior housing facilities is over twice that of SCs and STs who remain in overcrowded conditions.

38. No Toilets

Lack of access to toilets is a fundamental indicator of development backwardness, affecting hygiene, health, and personal dignity—especially for women and girls.

In Telangana, 13.3% of households reported having no toilet. Lack of in-house toilets remains a key deprivation indicator. About 18.8% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and a very high 32.5% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) reported no toilet facilities, exposing health and sanitation risks. Backward Classes (BCs) show 10.8%, whereas General Castes (OCs) have only 4.5%, reflecting far better access to basic sanitation. This stark contrast reveals deep sanitation inequality across communities.

39. No Electricity

Lack of electricity is a core indicator of infrastructural exclusion, limiting access to education, livelihoods, healthcare, and information. It reflects a basic failure in service delivery that perpetuates poverty and isolation.

In Telangana, 6.56 lakh or 5.8% of total households reported not having electricity. This gap highlights stark disparities in access to basic infrastructure across castes. The absence of electricity, critical for modern living standards, is high among Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 11.0%, and Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 8.3%. In contrast, only 4.7% of Backward Classes (BCs) and 2.7% of General Castes (OCs) lack electricity, showing a clear rural and social disadvantage for ST and SC households.

40. No Tap Water in House

Access to tap water, hence, is an indicator of economic well-being and effective public service delivery. Its absence forces households—especially women—to spend time collecting water, impacting health, education, and gender equity.

In Telangana, 21.2% of households reported lacking tap water access. Access to piped water remains limited, with 19.7% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 21.0% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) having no tap water supply. Backward Classes (BCs) stand at 20.0%, while General Castes (OCs) fare better with only 12.8% lacking tap water.

This reflects an infrastructural gap in water access for marginalized castes. The wide disparity of essential amenity such as drinking water via taps, underscores unequal access across castes.

41. Loan from Money Lender

Heavy reliance on private moneylenders indicates exclusion from formal financial institutions and exposes households to exploitative interest rates and chronic indebtedness. Loans from money lenders is a powerful indicator of financial exclusion and economic vulnerability.

6.8% of households reported loans borrowed from money lenders. This remains high among Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 9.7% and Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 8.8%. Backward Classes (BCs) report 7.1%, while General Castes (OCs) are much lower at 5.1%. This indicates exploitative informal credit dependence especially among SCs. This disparity underscores deep inequities in financial access and credit security across communities.

42. Marriage & Medical Loan

Taking loans for marriage or medical needs indicates financial insecurity and absence of savings to manage key life events or emergencies. It reflects the vulnerability of households to economic shocks and the lack of social safety nets, and thus is an important metric of measuring backwardness.

7.0% of households reported borrowing for marriage or medical purposes. Scheduled Castes (SCs) show the highest dependence on loans for essential needs like marriage or medical expenses at 10.9%, indicating limited savings or insurance coverage. Scheduled Tribes (STs) follow at 6.9%, while Backward Classes (BCs) stand at 7.3%. General Castes (OCs) have the lowest reliance at 3.0%, suggesting greater financial stability during emergencies among them. This contrast highlights stark differences in financial resilience and stability across castes.

Table 5 : CBI Parameters: by Social Groups

	CBI Parameters: By Social Groups *Positive Parameter ; Negative Parameter*	Backward Class	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	General Caste
	Social Discrimination				
1	Discriminated to visit place of worshi	5.0%	5.3%	4.0%	5.4%
2	Families with inter-caste marriage	4.7%	4.9%	3.2%	5.8%
	Gender				
3	Female to Male ratio	98.4%	101.0%	96.3%	97.6%
4	Girl Child marriage	4.6%	4.0%	3.9%	4.4%
5	Share of women studied below 10th	67.1%	66.5%	72.3%	55.0%
	Education				
6	Illiterate Children	3.6%	3.3%	3.7%	3.7%
7	School Dropout rate of Children	2.3%	2.1%	2.4%	2.1%
8	Population studied only upto primary	38.7%	38.6%	40.5%	34.6%
9	Intermediate Education	54.0%	57.0%	53.0%	44.0%
10	Population with diploma or above	20.3%	18.9%	15.9%	31.7%
11	Children attending state govt school	45.4%	49.1%	43.6%	32.4%
12	Children attending private school	17.3%	9.7%	7.8%	29.9%
13	Youth studied in English medium	48.1%	40.7%	36.6%	66.3%
	Occupation				
14	Daily Wage Labourers	32.2%	45.7%	40.6%	10.9%
15	Child Labour	0.8%	1.2%	1.8%	0.2%
16	Daily Wage vendors	5.7%	3.5%	2.8%	3.9%
17	MGNREGA Workers	1.0%	1.7%	1.2%	0.3%
18	Agricultural Labourer	18.3%	31.7%	32.2%	5.5%
19	Continuing Traditional Occupation	10.4%	3.0%	1.1%	2.0%
20	With professional government jobs	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%	3.5%
21	With professional private sector jobs	6.3%	5.6%	2.8%	14.8%
22	Own medium or large business	0.02%	0.01%	0.00%	0.06%
	Income				
23	Annual Income>0; <1 lac	80.5%	86.2%	88.2%	56.2%
24	Annual Income>1 lac; <5 lac	16.7%	11.7%	9.7%	30.6%
25	Annual Income>5 lac	2.9%	2.1%	2.1%	13.2%
26	Income Tax payer	7.9%	6.0%	5.0%	23.5%
	Land Ownership				
27	Own land	36.3%	35.2%	58.1%	33.7%
28	% of land irrigated	45.9%	43.4%	32.9%	44.1%
29	Avg irrigated land owned per family (	0.30	0.20	0.25	0.42
30	Families owning <5 acre land	85.0%	90.5%	80.1%	69.1%
31	Families owning 5-20 acre land	12.2%	7.0%	17.9%	26.4%
32	Families owning >20 acre land	2.9%	1.0%	2.0%	4.4%
	Living Conditions				
33	Share of Rural Population	58.2%	70.6%	88.4%	39.7%
34	Households with refrigerator	23.6%	15.7%	17.7%	35.9%
35	Households with car for personal use	2.4%	1.5%	1.6%	9.2%
36	Households with less than 2 rooms	63.9%	73.7%	75.6%	47.4%
37	Households with more than 3 rooms	28.5%	18.9%	17.6%	42.8%
38	Households with no toilet	10.8%	18.8%	32.5%	4.5%
39	Households with no electricity	4.7%	8.3%	11.0%	2.7%
40	Households with no tap water	20.0%	19.7%	29.2%	12.8%
	Financial Condition				
41	Loans for marriage or medical expens	7.3%	10.9%	6.9%	3.0%
42	Loan borrowed from money lender	8.7%	8.8%	9.7%	5.1%

APPENDIX 2: CBI PARAMETERS: SOCIAL GROUP has a graphical representation of the above table to show how the Backward Class, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and General Caste rank in each of the above parameters.

The range of values for each of these parameters, the state average and the most and least backward caste in each of the parameter is shown in the table below as well as in APPENDIX 3: CBI PARAMETERS: HIGH-LOW RANGE

Table 6 : CBI Parameters: Most & Least Backward caste

CBI Parameters: Most & Least Backward caste						
		State Average	Highest		Lowest	
			Value	Caste	Value	Caste
	Social Discrimination					
1	Discriminated to visit place of worship	5.7%	10.4%	BC-A Gangiredlavaru	1.6%	OC Iyengars/Iyer
2	Families with inter-caste marriage	5.6%	11.9%	OC Iyengars/Iyer	2.6%	ST Kolam
	Gender					
3	Female to Male ratio	97.9%	103.4%	ST Gond	90.7%	OC Iyengars/Iyer
4	Girl Child marriage	4.8%	8.1%	BC-A Gangiredlavaru	2.1%	OC Kapu
5	Share of women studied below 10th	65.5%	82.9%	ST Kolam	36.2%	OC Brahmins
	Education					
6	Illiterate Children	4.1%	9.3%	ST Kolam	2.3%	BC-B Perika
7	School Dropout rate of Children	2.2%	5.4%	ST Kolam	1.1%	OC Brahmins
8	Population studied only upto primary	38.1%	43.2%	ST Kolam	17.6%	OC Kapu
9	Intermediate Education	56.4%	83.6%	SC Mundala	31.3%	SC Mang
10	Population with diploma or above	20.3%	37.6%	OC Komati	4.4%	ST Kolam
11	Children attending state govt school	39.5%	54.4%	SC Mahar	9.7%	OC Jains
12	Children attending private school	9.8%	38.3%	OC Brahmins	1.1%	ST Kolam
13	Youth studied in English medium	47.0%	72.4%	OC Brahmins	10.7%	ST Kolam
	Occupation					
14	Daily Wage Labourers	31.3%	55.6%	BC-A Odde	2.6%	OC Brahmins
15	Child Labour	1.0%	3.3%	ST Kolam	0.1%	OC Brahmins
16	Daily Wage vendors	4.7%	10.9%	BC-B Vadrangi	0.8%	ST Kolam
17	MGNREGA Workers	1.0%	2.4%	SC Mala Sale	0.0%	OC Brahmins
18	Agricultural Labourer	19.4%	50.4%	ST Kolam	0.7%	OC Brahmins
19	Continuing Traditional Occupation	6.8%	29.4%	BC-A Rajaka	0.6%	ST Lambadis
20	With professional government jobs	2.8%	16.9%	OC Iyengars/Iyer	0.6%	ST Kolam
21	With professional private sector jobs	7.4%	26.9%	OC Raju	0.6%	ST Kolam
22	Own medium or large business	0.0%	0.2%	OC Komati	0.0%	ST Koya
	Income					
23	Annual Income>0; <1 lac	78.2%	95.4%	ST Kolam	32.6%	OC Brahmins
24	Annual Income>1 lac; <5 lac	17.4%	39.3%	OC Raju	4.2%	ST Kolam
25	Annual Income>5 lac	4.4%	30.1%	OC Brahmins	0.3%	ST Kolam
26	Income Tax payer	10.3%	46.1%	OC Brahmins	2.5%	ST Kolam
	Land Ownership					
27	Own land	35.6%	63.6%	BC-B Kuruba Kuruma	4.9%	OC Raju
28	% of land irrigated	43.0%	58.1%	BC-B Perika	8.3%	ST Kolam
29	Avg irrigated land owned per family (a	1.7	0.8	BC-B Perika	0.02	ST Kolam
30	Families owning <5 acre land	82.3%	91.4%	SC Madiga	58.3%	OC Raju
31	Families owning 5-20 acre land	14.9%	34.2%	OC Raju	6.0%	SC Madiga
32	Families owning >20 acre land	2.6%	8.3%	OC Jains	0.3%	SC Madiga
	Living Conditions					
33	Share of Rural Population	57.9%	97.2%	ST Kolam	7.4%	OC Jains
34	Households with refrigerator	22.6%	42.4%	OC Komati	3.2%	ST Kolam
35	Households with car for personal use	3.2%	16.4%	OC Brahmins	0.2%	ST Kolam
36	Households with less than 2 rooms	63.5%	86.8%	ST Kolam	32.6%	OC Brahmins
37	Households with more than 3 rooms	27.5%	55.1%	OC Komati	6.2%	ST Kolam
38	Households with no toilet	13.3%	64.4%	ST Kolam	2.3%	OC Brahmins
39	Households with no electricity	5.8%	27.6%	ST Kolam	0.8%	OC Jains
40	Households with no tap water	20.4%	64.7%	ST Kolam	3.2%	OC Jains
	Financial Condition					
41	Loans for marriage or medical expense	2.4%	14.7%	SC Beda	1.0%	OC Jains
42	Loan borrowed from money lender	6.8%	24.2%	SC Beda	2.3%	BC-B Are Marath

MEASURING BACKWARDNESS: CBI METHODOLOGY

Equal Weightage to all 42 Parameters

Each of the 42 parameters are assigned equal weightage, contributing 1 point each to the CBI. The Independent Expert Working Group consciously decided to assign equal weightage to each of the 42 parameters. This approach was rooted in the principle of fairness, simplicity, and methodological transparency. Any attempt to assign differential weightage would have required subjective judgments—such as deciding whether dependence on manual daily wage labor indicates greater backwardness than living in a house with less than two rooms. Such judgments can vary by context, region, and perception, making the process inherently biased. To avoid this, human discretion in prioritizing one form of deprivation over another was deliberately excluded.

The methodology implicitly captures the relative importance of different dimensions by including a greater number of parameters under key domains: Occupation (9 parameters) and Educational Attainment (8 parameters), Land & Assets (8) and Living Conditions (6). This structural design ensures that these core aspects—type of occupation, access to education, housing quality, and asset ownership—emerge as the critical drivers of the Composite Backwardness Index, without resorting to subjective weight assignments. Thus, the CBI maintains both objectivity and conceptual robustness in measuring relative backwardness.

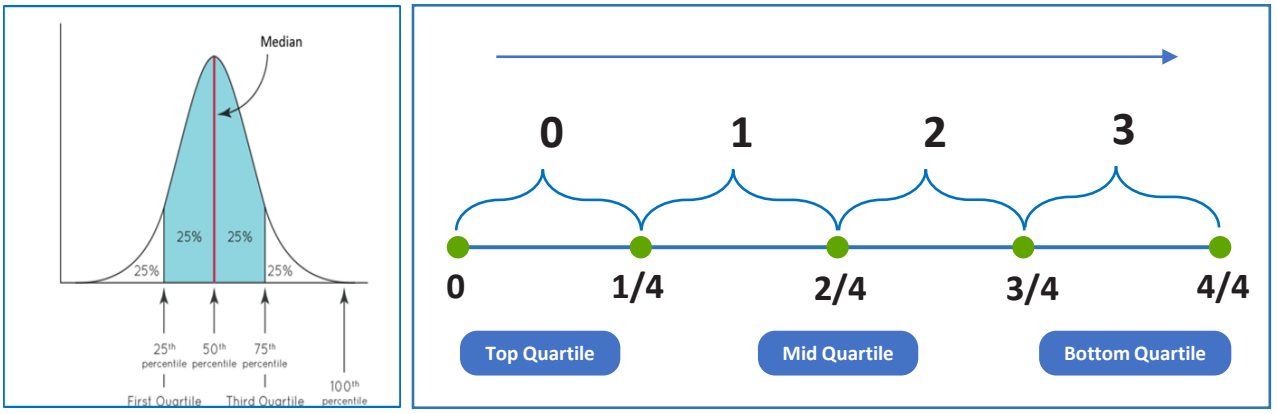
Quartile Based Approach to Measure Relative Backwardness

The CBI uses a relative quartile-based approach

- If a community's participation in a negative parameter (for example say: share of daily wage workers) falls in the bottom quartile—indicating a disproportionately high share—3 points are assigned.
- If this share falls within the middle 50-75% (inter-quartile range), the community receives 2 points for that indicator.
- If the share falls within the middle 25-50% (inter-quartile range), the community receives 1 point for that indicator.

- If the participation in a negative indicator falls in the top quartile (<25%)—indicating a disproportionately low share 0 point is assigned.

Figure 1: Quartile based approach to measure relative backwardness



Differentiating CBI Points for Positive and Negative Parameter

This accord of points is reversed in case it is a positive parameter such as number of graduates– where, more the number of graduates in a community, the better their condition. So if a community's share of graduates is among the lowest, falling in the bottom quartile and implying poor education conditions within the community, it is assigned 3 points, making it as backward with respect to this parameter.

While if a community's share of graduates is among the highest, falling in top quartile and implying attainment of higher education within a community, it is assigned 0 points, making it as least backward with respect to this parameter.

Example: Calculating CBI for Daily Wage Workers Parameter

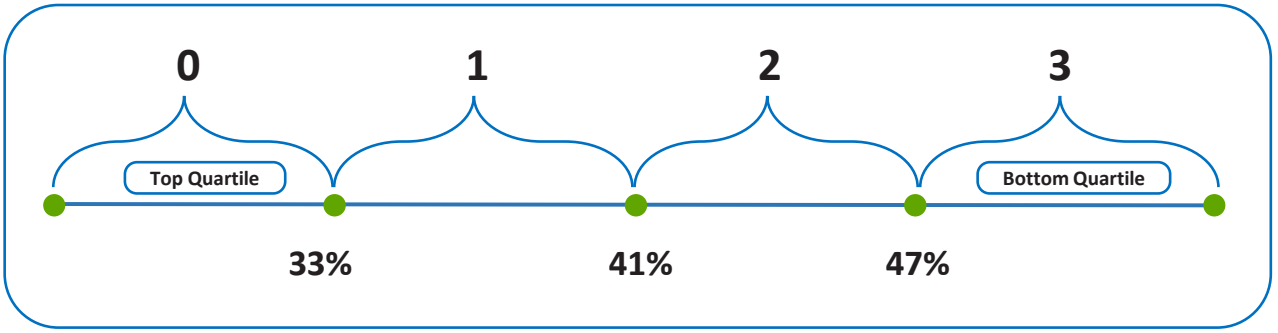
Let us take an example of Daily wage work as a negative parameter of backwardness and measure the relative backwardness for 4 different castes. We first take the % share of daily wage workers (rural) in each caste and arrive at the median (rural): 41%

To arrive at the bottom quartile, inter-median in the range of median (41%) and highest data point (68%) is deduced; which comes to be 47%. So all those castes having higher share of daily wage workers than 47% will fall in the bottom quartile, implying more relative backwardness.

Similarly, to arrive at the top quartile, the inter-median in the range of lowest data point (5%) and median (41%) is deduced, which comes to 33%. So all those castes having lower share of daily wage workers than 33% will fall in the top

quartile, implying less relative backwardness.

Figure 2: Quartile based approach to measure relative backwardness (Rural)



Suppose the percentage of daily wage workers in the Madiga community who belong to the SC category is 55% which makes them part of the bottom quartile as their % share of population engaged as daily wage workers (rural) is greater than 47%. This indicates a higher-than-normal manual daily wage workers.

In this case, the SC Madigas are assigned 3 points, marking them most backward with respect to this parameter of daily wage workers (rural).

Table 7: Share of Daily wage workers and CBI Points - Rural

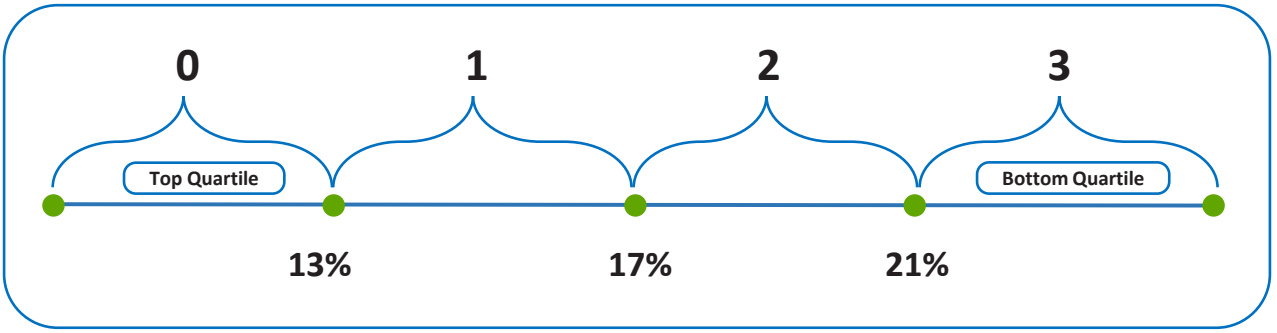
Caste	% Share of Daily wage workers (Rural)	CBI Points
SC Madiga	55 %	3
ST Gond	45 %	2
BC-B Goud	35 %	1
OC Reddy	16 %	0

Among Gonds of ST category, the percentage of rural daily wage workers is 45%. They are assigned 2 points; Among Gouds of BC-B category, the percentage is 35% getting them 1 point and Reddy's who have 16% daily wage workers among their rural population get 0 points.

CBI Separately for Rural and Urban Population

The CBI is calculated separately for rural and urban populations to account for the distinct socio-economic realities and challenges each faces. Rural and urban areas differ significantly in infrastructure, employment patterns, education access, and public service delivery. Weighting the rural and urban indices by their population share ensures proportional representation and accuracy.

Figure 3: Quartile based approach to measure relative backwardness (Rural & Urban)



We then similarly calculate CBI Points for each of the castes based on their % share of daily wage workers in urban demographics. So going back to the example of daily wage workers, the median for % share of urban daily wage workers is 17%; the bottom quartile is above 21%, the top quartile is less than 13.4%.

Table 8 : Share of Daily wage workers and CBI Points - Urban

Caste	% Share of Daily wage workers (Urban)	CBI Points
SC Madiga	29.3%	3
ST Gond	31.9%	3
BC-B Goud	15%	1
OC Reddy	6%	0

After deriving Rural CBI points and Urban CBI points, the Overall CBI is calculated by weighting the points as per the share of rural and urban populations.

Overall CBI of a Caste

=

% Share of Rural Population x Rural CBI + % Share of Urban Population x Urban CBI

In this example;

Overall CBI of ST Gond for the parameter of Daily Wage workers =

(% Share of Rural Gond Population) x Gond's Rural CBI

+

(% Share of Urban Gond Population) x Gond's Urban CBI

= (94%) x 2 + (6%)3 = 2.06

Overall CBI Score of Gonds for Parameter of Daily Wage Workers = 2.06

MANDAL COMMISSION AND CBI

The CBI represents an evolution from the Mandal Commission framework. While it retains the core objective of identifying backwardness, it expands the lens by:

- Including more diverse and contemporary indicators (42 vs 11)
- Applying uniform weightage for simplicity and equity
- Using quartile-based scoring for more data-sensitive classification

Table 9: Comparison Table: Mandal Commission vs TG SEEEPC

Mandal Commission		Telangana SEEEPC	
Category	**Parameters (11)**	**Parameters (42)**	**Category**
Social (3 points each)	Considered backward by others	Discrimination in Places of Worship	Social Discrimination (1 point each)
	Share of manual labour	Inter-caste marriages	
	Prevalence of child marriage	Female to Male Ratio	Women Empowerment (1 point each)
	Women Workforce participation	Female Child Marriage	
Education (2 points each)	Children never attended school	Women with education below 10th grade	
	Dropout rate	Illiterate Children	Educational Attainment (1 point each)
	High school matriculation	School Drop outs	
Economic (1 point each)	Assets (Land, House)	Children studying primary & below	
	Living in kachcha house	Diploma and and above	
	Drinking water access (<0.5 km)	Govt Schools	
	Consumption loan	Private Education	
		English Medium Education	

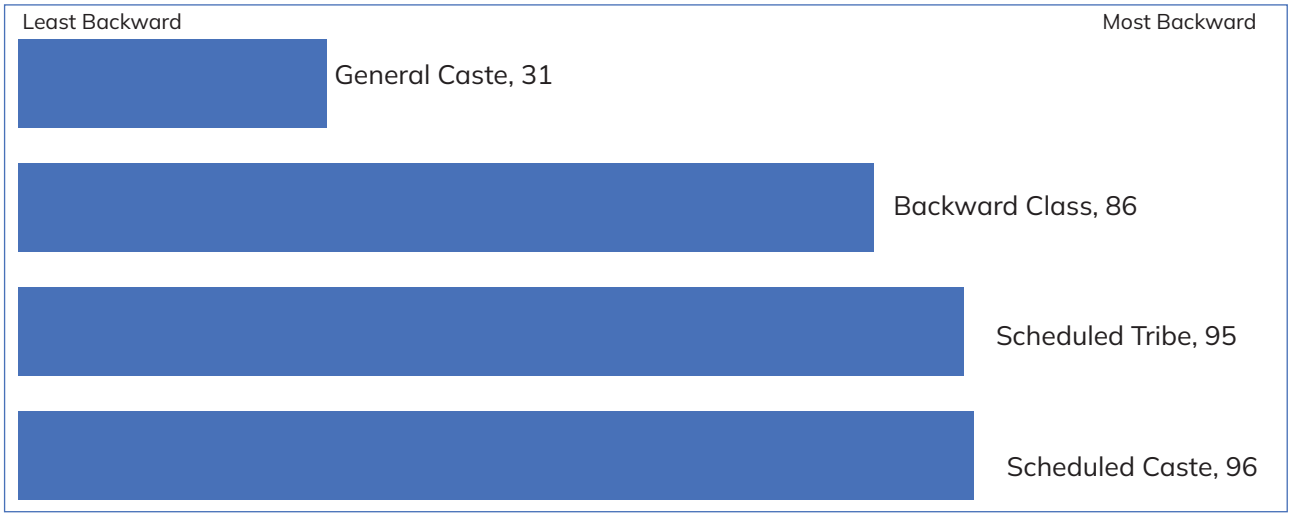
Mandal Commission		Telangana SEEEPC	
Category	Parameters (11)	Parameters (42)	Category
		Daily Wage Workers	Type of Occupation (1 point each)
		Child Labour	
		MGNREGA workers	
		Agriculture labourers	
		Informal/Street Vendors	
		Continuing in Traditional Occupation	
		State Government Jobs	
		Private Sector Jobs	
		Own a large/medium business	
		Share of Rural Population	Living Conditions (1 point each)
		Number of Rooms <=2	
		Number of Rooms >=3	
		No Toilets	
		No Electricity	
		Tap Water in House	
		Less than ₹1 lakh annual income	Income (1 point each)
		₹1-5 lakh annual income	
		₹5-50 lakh annual income	
		Income Tax Payer	
		Household with Land	Land Ownership (1 point each)
		Household with Irrigated Land	
		Average Irrigated Land per Household	
		Own Land <5 acre	
		Own Land 5-20 acre	
		Own Land >50 acre	
		Refrigerator ownership	Movable Assets (1 point each)
		Car ownership	
		Loan from Money Lender	Access to Institutional Credit (1 point each)
		Marriage & Medical Loan	

CBI RANKING and SCORES

Using the methodology described in the MEASURING BACKWARDNESS: CBI METHODOLOGY chapter, CBI scores were computed for each of the 242 caste groups as well as the 'No Caste' and 'Others' categories. To reiterate, CBI is a measure of relative backwardness of castes in Telangana and not an absolute measure. For every one of the 42 parameters, each caste was given points based on the quartile they belonged to for that parameter. All of the data used to calculate this is based on self-reported information in the SEEEPC survey and not any official data. So, parameters such as land ownership, income may be subject to 'honesty' biases of different castes but across 3.55 crore (35 million) people, such biases are expected to even or cancel out for the purposes of computing relative backwardness while they may be a significant error for absolute values.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are Thrice as Backward as General Caste

Figure 4: Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) (Entire state of Telangana)



SC as a group comes out as the most backward in Telangana with a CBI score of 96. But the STs are almost equally backward with a score of 95. To put these in context, the overall weighted average CBI score for the entire state is 81. The SCs and STs are nearly 15 points more backward than the average person in Telangana. The Backward Classes have a CBI score of 86 which is below the state average. The General Castes have a CBI score of 31, well above the state

average indicating much higher levels of development and prosperity relative to others. Recall that higher the CBI score, the more backward a caste is.

This is perhaps in line with the general expectations of social group disparities in India. The CBI framework not only reconfirms this accepted wisdom but also gives a sense for the relative disparity and distance between the more developed social groups and the ones left behind. In a numerical sense, the SCs and STs are thrice as backward as the General Castes. Of course, this chart only shows CBI scores at the aggregate level of social groups and not at an individual caste level where there could be some castes even within the broader BC, SC and ST groups that are more backward than the rest.

It must also be pointed out that the 'No Caste' group of 1.2 million people have a CBI score of 48 which is well below the state average of 81. This reaffirms a widely held belief among sociologists and scholars that it is usually only the more privileged ones that choose to disassociate themselves from caste identities or believe that caste is not a significant factor in Indian society since their own lived experiences do not intersect with caste. This is perhaps for the first time that there is rigorous empirical evidence for a well-accepted sociological belief that 'No Caste' is nothing but just an ideological proxy for relatively better-off people disavowing caste.

The gap between the General Castes and the rest underlines the depth of historical and structural disadvantage faced by BCs, SCs, and STs in society, despite many decades of social justice policies of reservations in government employment and education.

135 Castes Accounting for 67% of Population More Backward

As mentioned in the previous section, the weighted average CBI score for the entire state of Telangana works out to 81. 135 out of the 242 castes have a CBI score of more than 81. This suggests that 135 castes can be deemed as more backward than the average caste in Telangana. Of these 135 castes, 69 are Backward Classes, 41 are Scheduled Caste and 25 are Scheduled Tribe. These 135 castes account for 67% of the total population.

The flip side of a ranking framework is that there are castes within the broader group of Backward Class, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes that are better than the state average in terms of backwardness. That is, of the total 133 castes under Backward Class, 69 castes can be construed as more backward while the remaining 64 as less backward. Similarly, 18 out of the 41 designated Schedule

Castes and 7 out of 25 Scheduled Tribe castes are less backward than the state average. The table below shows the number of castes and share of the state population in each social group that are below and above the state average in CBI scores. Expectedly, all 18 castes under the General Caste group are well above the state average in CBI scores indicating their relative prosperity.

Table 10 : More and Less Backward Castes: Summary

Group	Total Number of Castes	More Backward (than state average)		Less Backward (than state average)	
		Castes/Tribes	Share of population	Castes/Tribes	Share of population
Backward Class	133	69	40%	64	17%
Scheduled Caste	59	41	17%	18	0.5%
Scheduled Tribe	32	25	10%	7	0.1%
General Caste	18	0	NA	18	12%
Total	**242**	**135**	**67%**	**107**	**29%**

99% of STs, 97% of SCs, 71% of BCs More Backward Than Rest

It is equally striking to observe that 99% of all Scheduled Tribes belonging to 25 out of the 32 ST castes are more backward than the state average. Similarly, 97% of all Scheduled Castes belonging to 41 out of the 59 SC castes are more backward and 71% of all Backward Class people in 69 castes are more backward.

This is as important a finding of this report as the specific ranking of all the castes. Recall that the share of population of each caste was not a factor in computing their backwardness, yet remarkably the results show that an overwhelming majority of Tribals and Dalits are more backward than the average in the state. This is as much of a vindication of the long-held notion about caste disparities as it is a commentary about the robustness of the CBI framework and the quality of the SEEEPC survey.

Contribution to Backwardness of Each Social Group

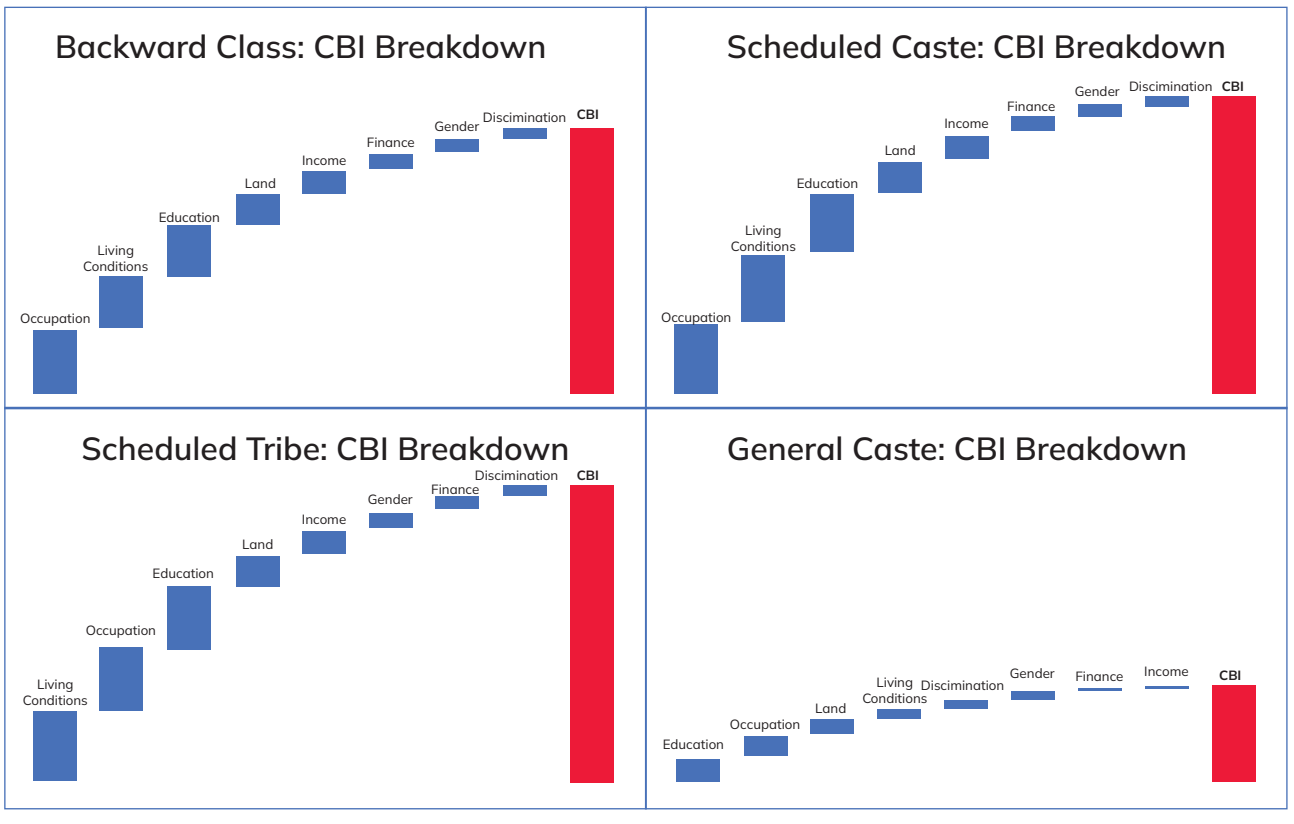
Recall that the Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) of each caste is calculated using 42 parameters divided broadly into eight categories, as detailed in the section COMPOSITE BACKWARDNESS INDEX (CBI).

These eight categories are:

1. Education
2. Occupation
3. Living Standards
4. Income
5. Land & Movable Assets
6. Gender
7. Social Discrimination
8. Access to Finance

The total CBI of each caste is a summation of the CBI scores in each of these categories. It is then interesting to observe what drives backwardness of each social group among these eight categories.

Figure 5: Waterfall build-up of Composite Backwardness Index (CBI)



The charts above give the 'waterfall' build-up of CBI for each social group. Clearly, Occupation and Living Conditions are the biggest drivers of backwardness for the more backwards social groups of BC, SC and ST. Land and Income are the next two big drivers. Interestingly, the CBI score of the more developed General Caste group is driven by Education and less by Income.

CBI Alone Cannot Adequately Explain Causes of Backwardness

It is important to note that this is not a remark on what causes backwardness and these are not causal variables. Backwardness as measured by CBI is just a statistical measure and is not equipped with explanatory power to accurately or rigorously make claims on causality. For example, it cannot explain if incomes of Scheduled Castes are lower than General Caste because they are more backward or that they are more backward because their incomes are lower. The directionality of the relationship of these 42 parameters to overall backwardness is a complex subject, best left to sociologists, anthropologists and social activists to explain than a mere statistical exercise.

The next few sections will delve deeper into some of these categories of parameters to show in more granular detail the breakup of the 56 big castes across each of these categories.

EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS

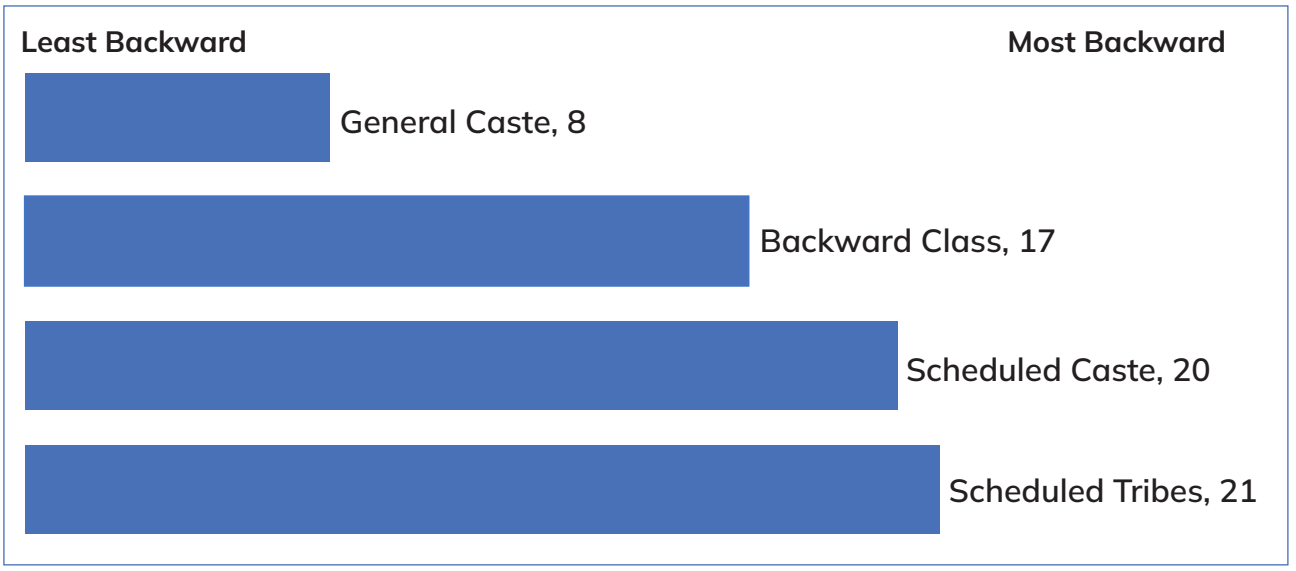
Educational attainment has increasingly become one of the most fundamental parameters for measuring social and economic backwardness in today's day and age. In an age where access to knowledge and skills shapes the trajectory of individuals and communities, education is not merely a developmental goal—it is the very foundation of upward mobility. From securing dignified employment to accessing healthcare, asserting civic rights, or escaping the cycle of poverty, education serves as the gateway to opportunity and empowerment.

To understand educational attainment holistically, it is essential to go beyond school enrollment rates as it has little variance among communities. Instead, this report uses eight key indicators that capture the breadth and depth of educational experience: the proportion of illiterate children, school dropouts, those who have studied up to primary or below, those who have completed intermediate (12th standard), and those with diplomas or higher education.

Additionally, we consider the type of schooling—government versus private—as well as access to English medium education, which increasingly serves as a proxy for quality and global competitiveness.

Education Backwardness Index of Social Groups

Figure 6: Overall Education Backwardness



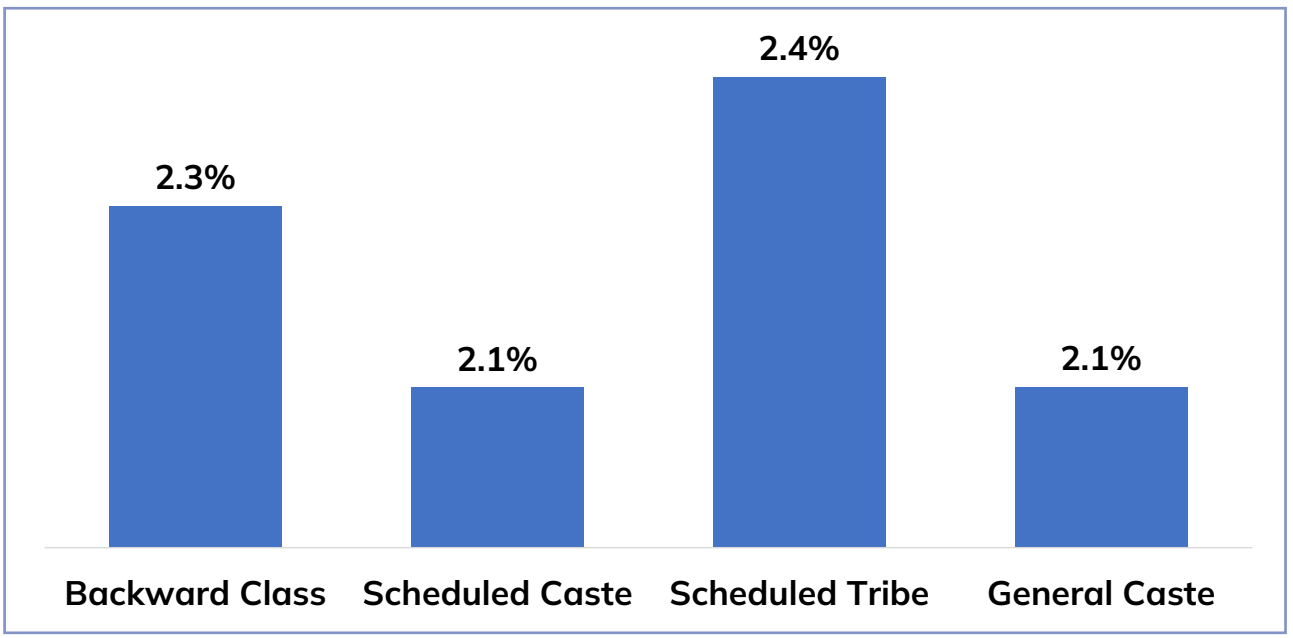
On overall education parameters, there is a wide disparity between the General Caste and the marginalised groups of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward Class. This disparity sets the foundation to exacerbate and amplify further gaps between these social groups across occupation and income.

Share of Education Attainment Across Parameters

1. School Drop-out

School dropout rates serve as a critical indicator of socio-economic and educational backwardness. They reflect a breakdown in the schooling journey during formative years, which is often not merely a personal choice but the outcome of deeper structural issues such as poverty, social exclusion, child labor, gender-based discrimination, and lack of institutional support.

Figure 7: School Dropout Rates by Caste Group



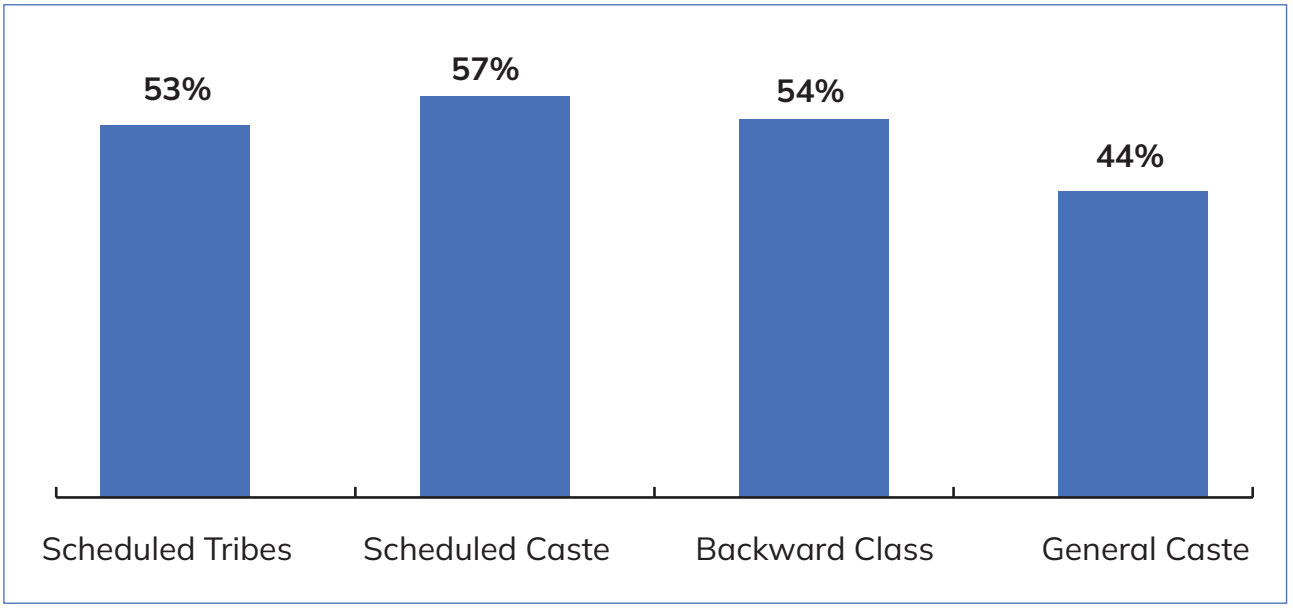
Scheduled Tribes (STs) have the highest dropouts at 2.4%, exceeding the state average (2.2%). This suggests persistent challenges such as poor access to schools, economic hardship, and cultural barriers in tribal areas that hinder consistent educational participation.

Backward Classes (BCs) record dropout rate of 2.3%, about the same as state average. This parity may reflect the impact of policies promoting educational inclusion for marginalized communities. In contrast, General Castes (OCs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) show the low dropout rate at 2.1%, below the state average.

2. Education Attainment up to Intermediate (12th standard)

Educational attainment up to the intermediate (12th standard) level is a crucial indicator of access to higher education and skilled employment opportunities. A high proportion of people who haven't progressed beyond Class 12 often reflects systemic barriers such as poverty, lack of institutional support, and social exclusion.

Figure 8: Education Attainment up to 12th Standard by Caste Group

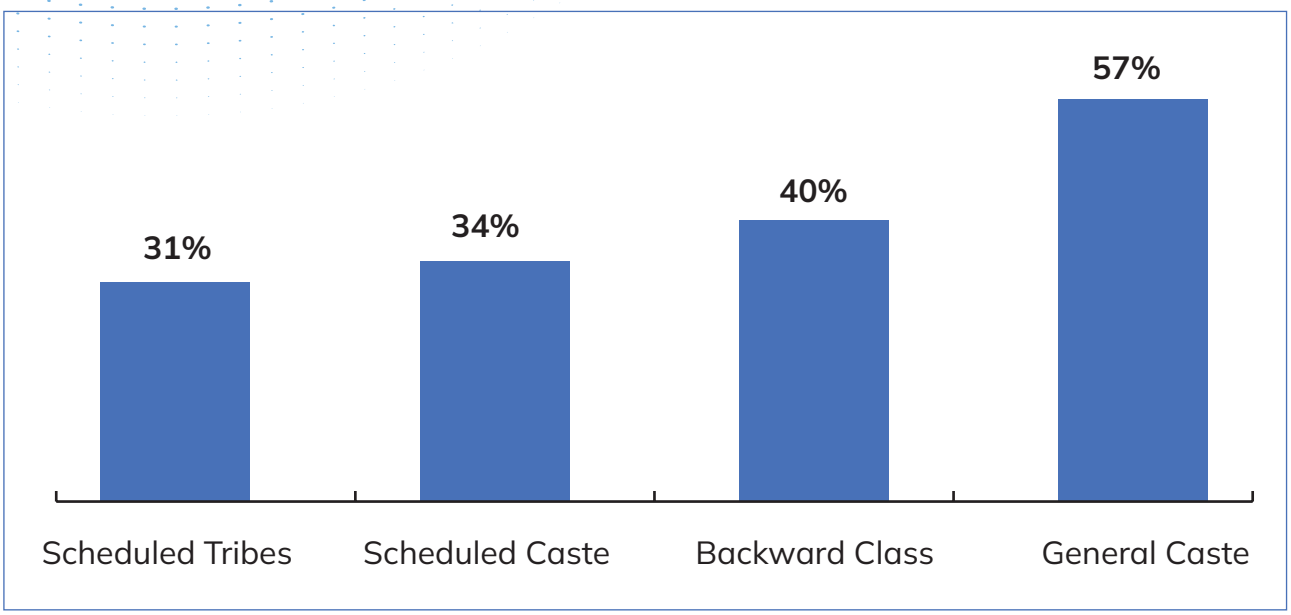


In Telangana, 56.4% have attained education upto 12th Standard. Scheduled Castes (SCs) are slightly above this average at 57%, indicating that a majority are concentrated at the secondary education level without progressing to higher education. Backward Classes (BCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) also have high proportions at 54% and 53% respectively, just slightly below the state average.

3. Education Attainment beyond Diploma (Graduates)

Educational attainment at the diploma level or above is a key indicator of access to higher education, technical skills, and formal employment. A low share suggests limited educational progression and restricted entry into well-paying, skilled jobs.

Figure 9: Higher Education Attainment by Social Category



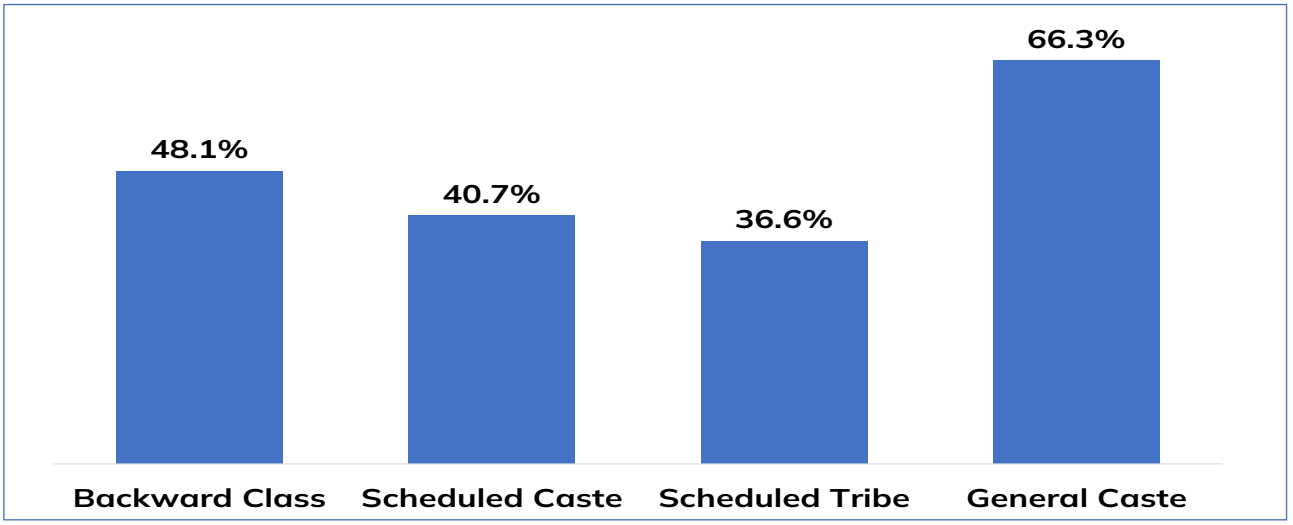
If we look at it by social categories, General Castes (OCs) stand out with 57% of individuals obtaining diploma or above, indicating significantly better access to advanced education and pathways into professional and formal employment sectors.

In contrast, Scheduled Tribes (STs) have the lowest proportion at 31%, suggesting that the majority do not progress beyond intermediate education. Scheduled Castes (SCs) are also below the state average at 34%, reinforcing that a substantial share of these communities face barriers to higher education. Backward Classes (BCs) perform modestly better, with 40% attaining diploma or above—slightly above the state average but still well below the Other Caste group.

4. Youth in English Medium

English medium education is a key indicator of a community's access to modern, competitive learning and employment opportunities. Proficiency in English is increasingly tied to better jobs, higher education, and digital access, making it a gateway to social mobility.

Figure 10: Youth Attending English Medium Education

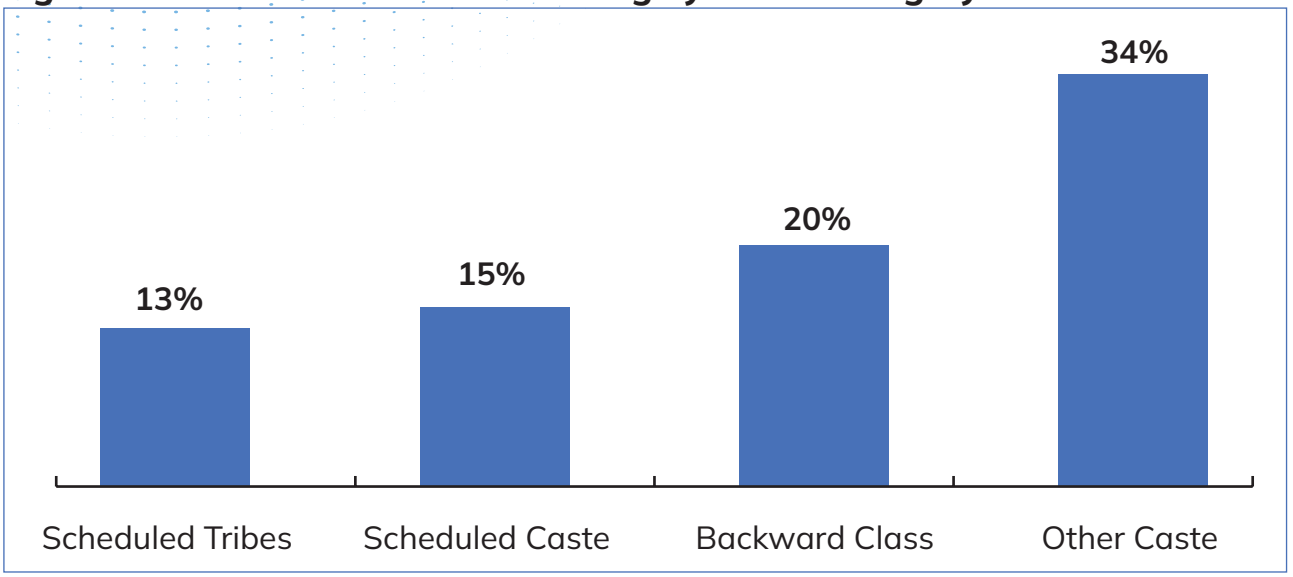


In Telangana, the state average of youth studying in English medium is 47.0%. General Castes significantly exceed this average, with 63% receiving English medium education. This reflects a higher degree of readiness for competitive exams and global job markets. Backward Classes also perform slightly above the state average, at 48.1%, indicating moderate access to English education and a gradual shift toward aspirational schooling choices. In contrast, Scheduled Castes (40.7%) and Scheduled Tribes (36.6%) fall below the state average, revealing limited access to English medium instruction—often due to economic barriers, rural settings, or dependence on government schools, where regional languages dominate.

5. Access to Non-Government/Private Schools

Access to private schooling is an important metric as it often reflects a family's economic capacity, awareness, and agency in making educational choices. Private schools are typically associated with better infrastructure, lower student-teacher ratios, and English-medium instruction, which are perceived to offer better learning outcomes.

Figure 11: Access to Private Schooling by Social Category



The state average stands at 21%, but General Castes significantly exceed this, with 34% of their population attending private schools. This reflects greater economic capacity, access to urban centers, and awareness of the perceived advantages of private education.

In contrast, Scheduled Tribes (13%) and Scheduled Castes (15%) have the lowest levels of private school attendance, well below the state average. These figures signal limited access to educational choices, largely due to financial constraints, rural isolation, or social exclusion. Even Backward Classes, at 20%, fall slightly below the state average, suggesting modest access improvements but still behind more privileged castes.

OCCUPATIONAL BACKWARDNESS

Occupation is one of the most critical parameters for assessing social and economic backwardness in contemporary society. The kind of work a community predominantly engages in reflects not just their economic position but also their access to education, skill development, capital, and social mobility. A high concentration of individuals in manual labor, daily wage work, or agricultural labor often indicates a lack of stable income, job security, and formal employment opportunities, all of which are core markers of socio-economic disadvantage.

Similarly, the prevalence of child labor within a community is a distress signal, pointing to extreme poverty and the breakdown of protective social structures like schooling and welfare.

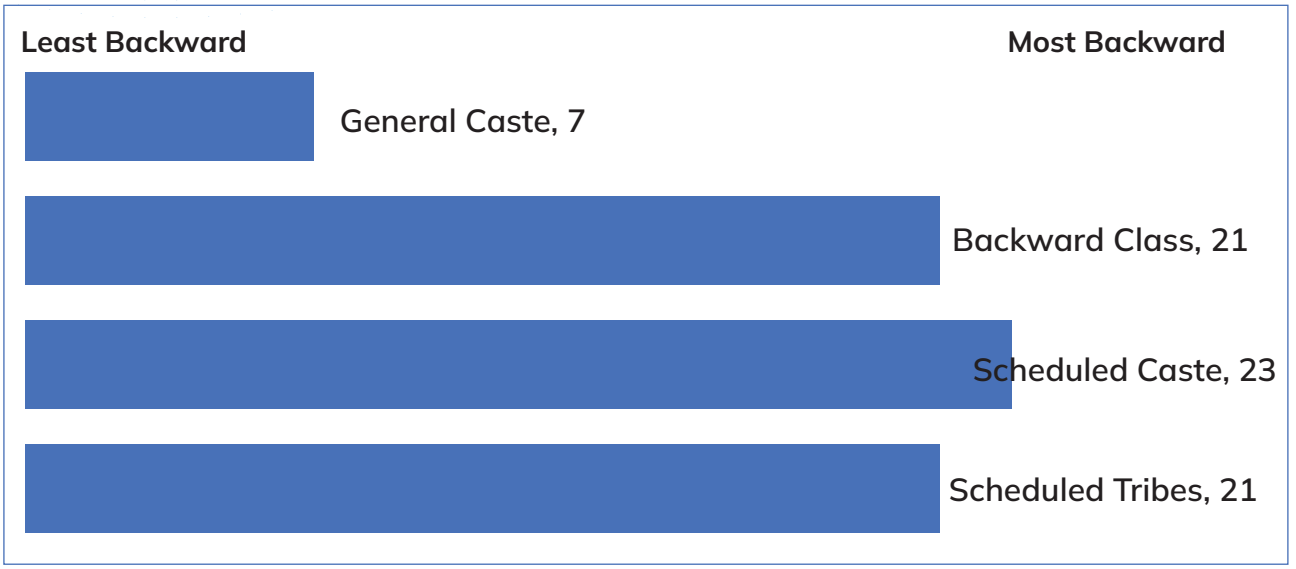
In contrast, participation in government jobs, which provide job security and social prestige, or in private sector jobs that offer higher wages and career advancement, signifies better socio-economic standing. Likewise, owning a medium to large-scale business reflects access to capital, networks, and market knowledge, all of which are indicative of upward mobility and relative privilege.

Additionally, examining how many people in a community continue to engage in traditional occupations—especially those linked to caste-based roles like tanning, weaving, or manual scavenging—helps highlight lack of diversification and access to modern or alternate livelihoods. While some traditional occupations carry cultural value, their persistence without choice or mobility often signals continued marginalization.

To assess these occupational patterns holistically, we use 10 key indicators: proportion of daily wage workers, child labor, agricultural laborers, MGNREGA workers, government employees, private sector workers, business owners, and those still in traditional occupations. Together, these help map out which communities have progressed into secure, skilled, or entrepreneurial roles, and which remain stuck in low-income, insecure, or inherited livelihoods.

Occupation Backwardness Index of Social Groups

Figure 12: Overall Occupation Backwardness

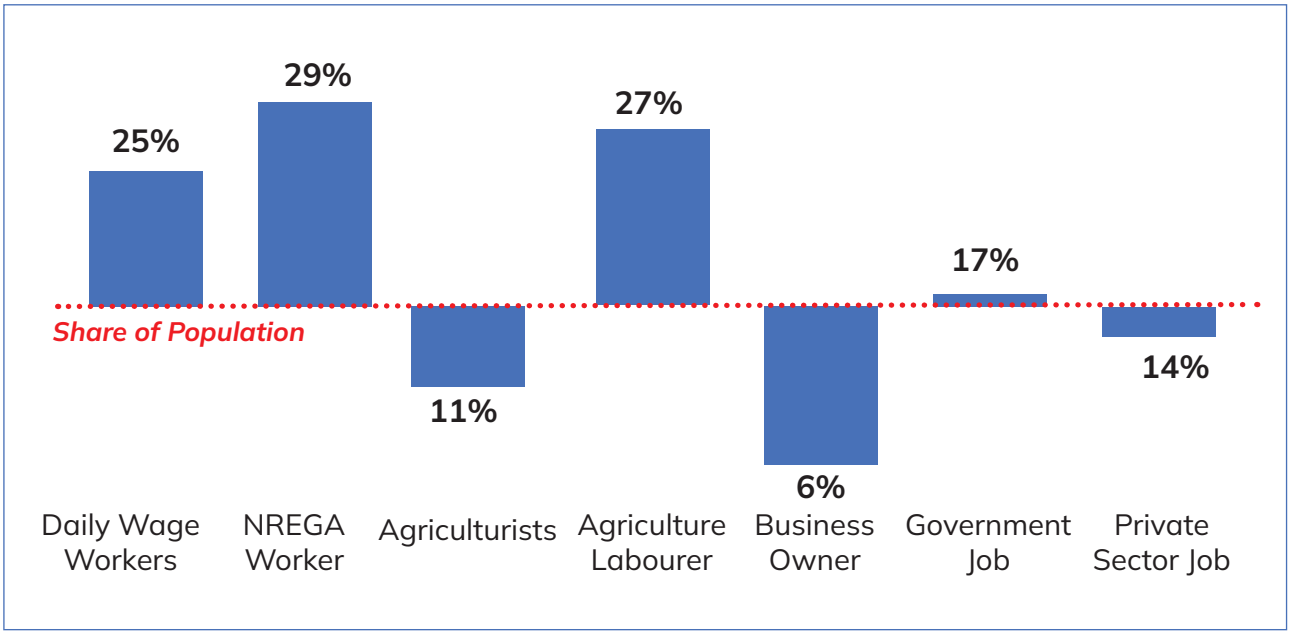


The Occupation Backwardness scores yet again reflect the stark disparities in occupation levels across the more marginalized groups of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes vis-à-vis General Caste. But in contrast to Education, Scheduled Tribes fare better than Scheduled Caste in overall occupational indices, albeit very marginally. The Backward Classes and Scheduled Tribes have similar Occupation Backwardness scores. But strikingly the distance in backwardness between the General Caste and Scheduled Caste in Occupation parameters is as high as what we observed in Education. Of course, Education and Occupation are inter-related but the element of traditional occupation and land based occupational activities negate the need for education and it is perhaps one reason why STs are more backward than SCs in education but slightly better than SCs in occupation.

Share of Participation by Occupational Categories

Scheduled Castes are over-represented as Daily wage, NREGA & Agri workers, while being highly under-represented in owning medium-large businesses

Figure 13: SC Occupational Distribution



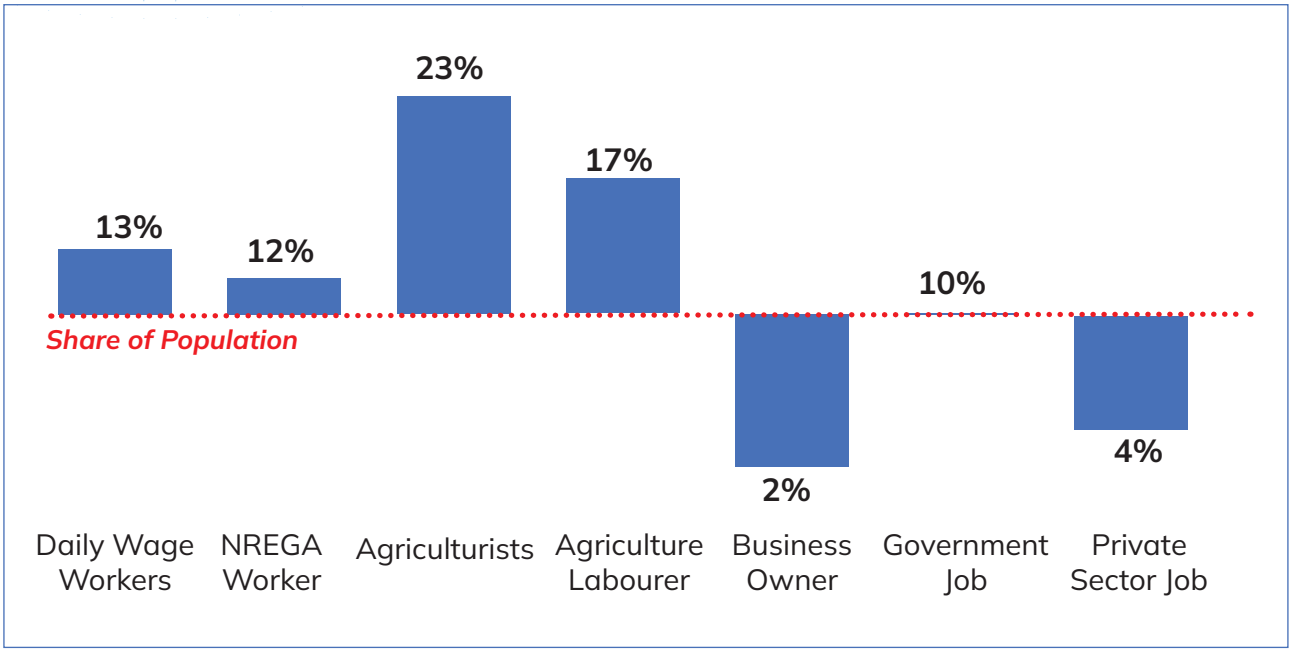
The share of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) across different types of occupation is benchmarked against their population share of 17.4%. The bars crossing the dotted line imply over-participation i.e. representation greater than the share of population and those below indicate under-participation i.e representation lesser than the share of population.

SCs are highly overrepresented in manual and insecure forms of labor. Notably, 29% of all MGNREGA workers and 27% of agricultural laborers belong to Scheduled Castes—well above their 17.4% population share. Similarly, 25% of daily wage laborers are SCs. These figures highlight a significant dependence on informal, low-paying, and seasonal work with limited job security or long-term benefits.

In contrast, SCs are underrepresented in high-value and secure occupations. Only 7% of business owners in medium or large enterprises belong to Scheduled Castes (SC), signaling low access to entrepreneurial capital, markets, and networks. But their representation in government jobs (17%) is nearly proportional to their population, possibly reflecting the impact of affirmative action and reservations. However, this parity is not seen in the private sector: about 14% of professional private sector employees are SCs.

Scheduled Tribes are overly represented as agriculture labourers while being highly under-represented in owning medium-large businesses

Figure 14: ST Occupational Distribution



The share of the Scheduled Tribes (STs) across different types of occupation is benchmarked against their population share of 10.3%. The bars crossing the dotted line imply over-participation i.e. representation greater than the share of population and those below indicate under-participation i.e representation lesser than the share of population.

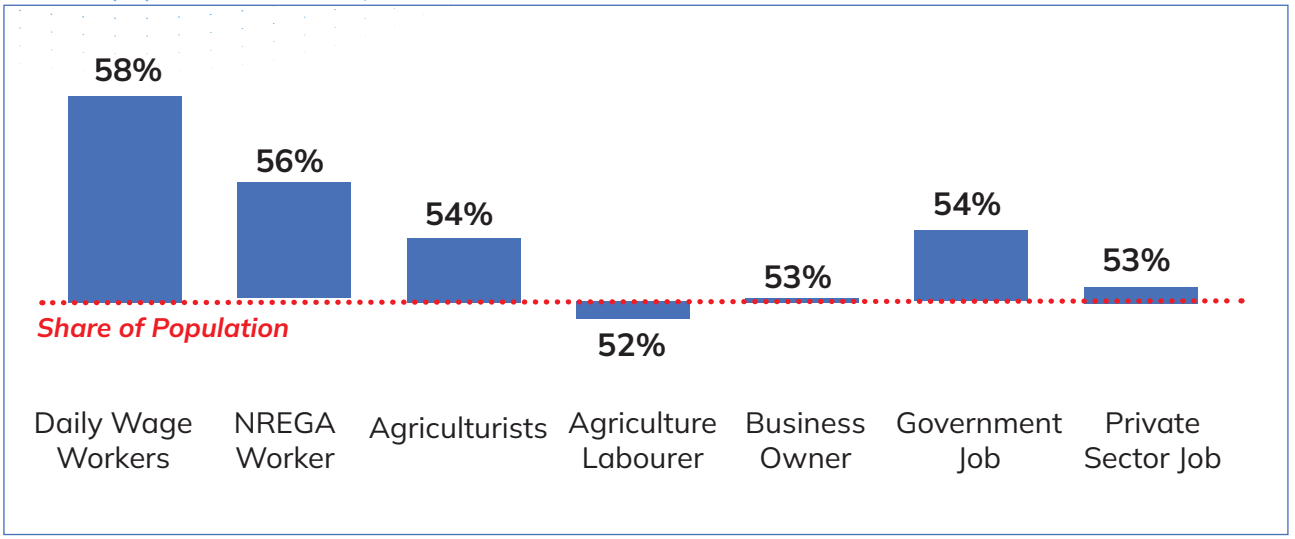
One of the most striking observations is the substantial over-representation of STs in agricultural labour, with a 17% share—significantly above their 10.3% population proportion. This suggests a strong reliance on manual, low-income agrarian work within tribal communities. Similarly, STs are over-represented in daily wage labour (13%) and NREGA work (12%), both of which are typically informal and unstable sources of employment.

In contrast, STs are significantly under-represented in sectors that typically offer greater financial security and career advancement. For instance, only 4% are engaged in professional private sector jobs. However, the representation in government jobs is almost on par with their share of population suggesting the effect of reservation in public sector employment.

However, even starker disparity is observed in business ownership. Only 3% of STs own medium or large businesses, suggesting major barriers to entrepreneurship—such as limited capital access, poor market connectivity, and systemic exclusion from economic growth.

BCs are over-represented as Daily Wage Workers

Figure 15: BC Occupational Distribution



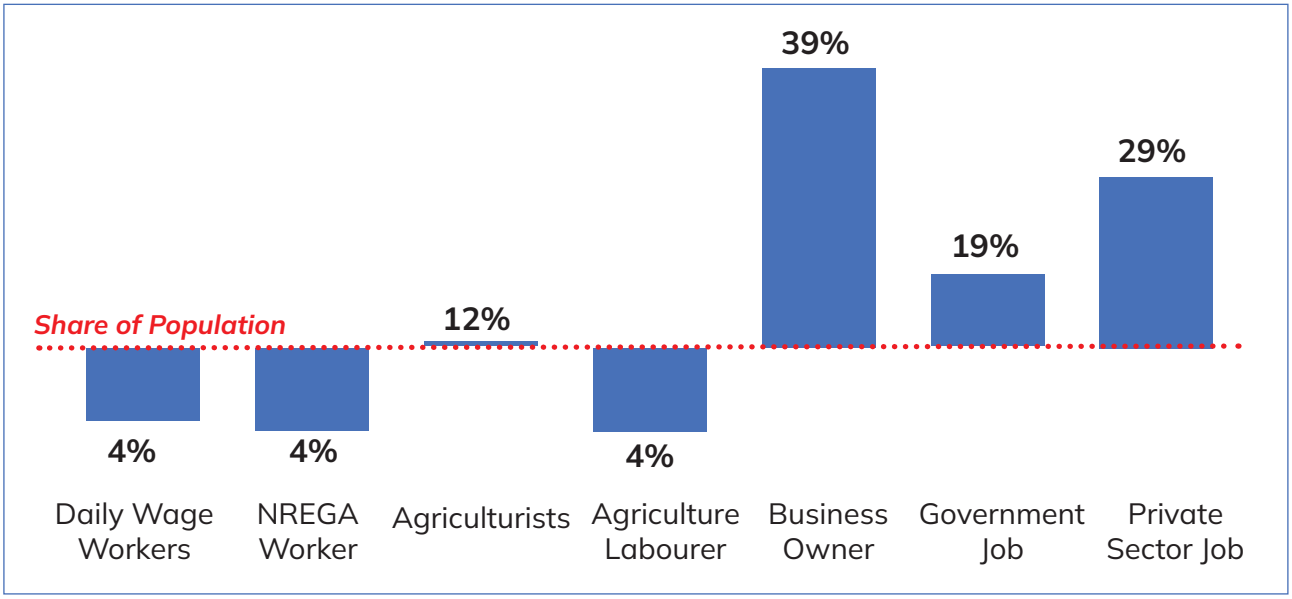
The share of the Backward Classes (BCs) across different types of occupation is benchmarked against their population share of 52.6%. The bars crossing the dotted line imply over-participation i.e. representation greater than the share of population and those below indicate under-participation i.e representation lesser than the share of population.

BCs are over-represented in daily wage labor (58%) and as NREGA workers (56%); showing their continued reliance on informal and low-paying work. However, their participation in agricultural labor (52%) is slightly below their population share.

Further, 54% of government jobs are held by those coming from the Backward Classes, and is slightly higher than their population share. Similarly, they account for over 53% of private professional jobs and 53% share in business ownership of medium and large enterprises, which is about the same as their share of population.

General Castes (OCs) are over-represented in ownership of business and private sector jobs

Figure 16: General Caste Occupational Distribution



The occupational distribution of the General Castes (OCs) across different sectors is benchmarked against their population share of 11.9%. The bars crossing the dotted line imply over-participation i.e. representation greater than the share of population and those below indicate under-participation i.e representation lesser than the share of population.

People belonging to General Castes (OC) are significantly over-represented in high-status and economically advantageous occupations. A striking 39% of OC (General Caste) individuals own medium or large businesses—nearly three times their population share. This points to strong entrepreneurial representation and access to capital and networks. Similarly, they constitute 29% of private professional job holders, more than double their demographic share.

In contrast, they are substantially under-represented in informal and low-wage sectors. Only 4% are engaged in daily wage work, 4% in NREGA jobs, and 3% in agricultural labour—well below their 11.9% population share.

Their representation in government jobs stands at 19%, slightly exceeding their population proportion. Although government employment is generally competitive and regulated by reservation policies, the OC(General Caste) share indicates success in securing these roles despite limited reservation benefits.

LIVING CONDITIONS BACKWARDNESS

Living conditions are one of the most fundamental and visible markers of social and economic backwardness. They reflect the quality of life, access to basic services, and overall standard of well-being enjoyed—or denied—by different communities. Unlike income or employment, which can fluctuate, living conditions are shaped over time and provide a long-term, stable indicator of development or deprivation. They offer crucial insights into whether households have access to the essentials needed for a dignified life, such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, adequate housing, and proximity to urban services.

In a deeply hierarchical society like India, caste-based inequalities are physically manifested in where and how people live. Marginalized communities are often relegated to rural areas, urban slums, or isolated hamlets, excluded from mainstream development. These spatial disadvantages compound social exclusion, limiting access to schools, healthcare, jobs, public transport, and civic amenities. Living conditions, therefore, are not just a reflection of economic status, but also of historical and structural discrimination.

To holistically assess living condition backwardness, we use a set of indicators that capture multiple dimensions of household well-being.

These include:

- The type of settlement a community predominantly inhabits—whether rural, urban, slum, or isolated areas. Communities concentrated in underserved regions often face infrastructural neglect.

- The size of the dwelling, particularly whether households live in less than two rooms, which signals overcrowding and lack of privacy, or in three or more rooms, which reflects housing adequacy and comfort.

- Access to toilets, a basic yet crucial indicator of hygiene, health, and dignity, especially for women and the elderly.

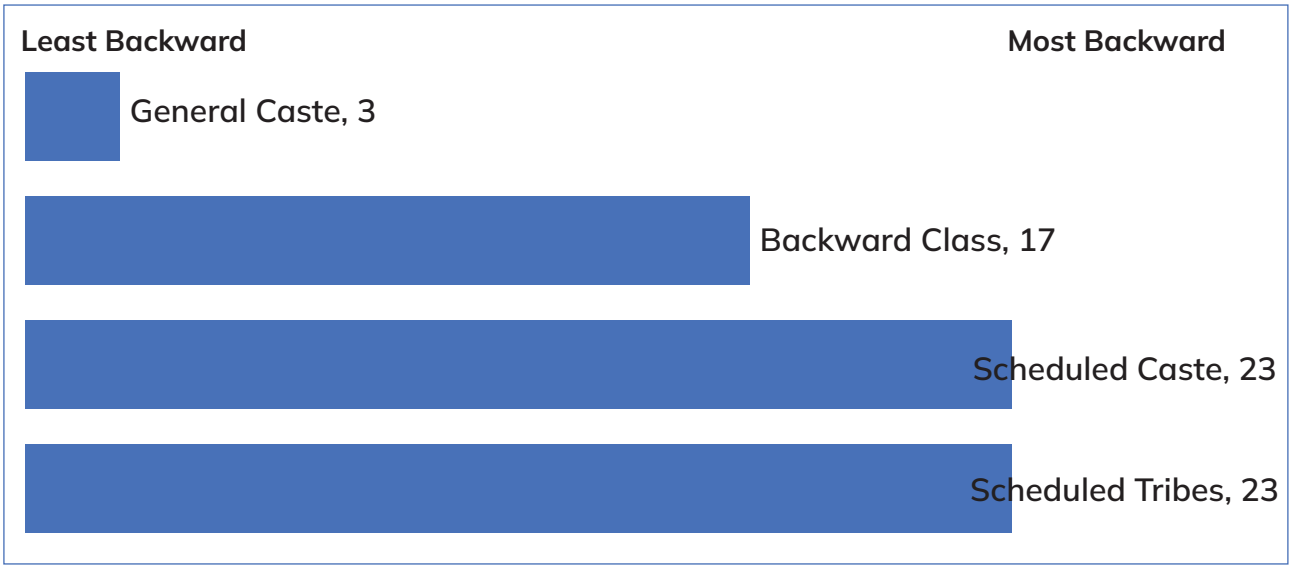
- Access to electricity, which influences every aspect of modern life—from lighting and cooking to education and connectivity.

- Availability of clean drinking water through in-house piped connections, which is essential for health and convenience, and reduces the burden of water collection, especially on women.

These indicators collectively provide a composite view of material living standards and help assess how different caste groups fare in their everyday living environments. Measuring these disparities allows for targeted interventions and equitable resource distribution, ensuring that no community is left behind in the pursuit of dignity, health, and opportunity.

Living Conditions Backwardness Index of of Social Groups

Figure 17: Overall Living Conditions Backwardness

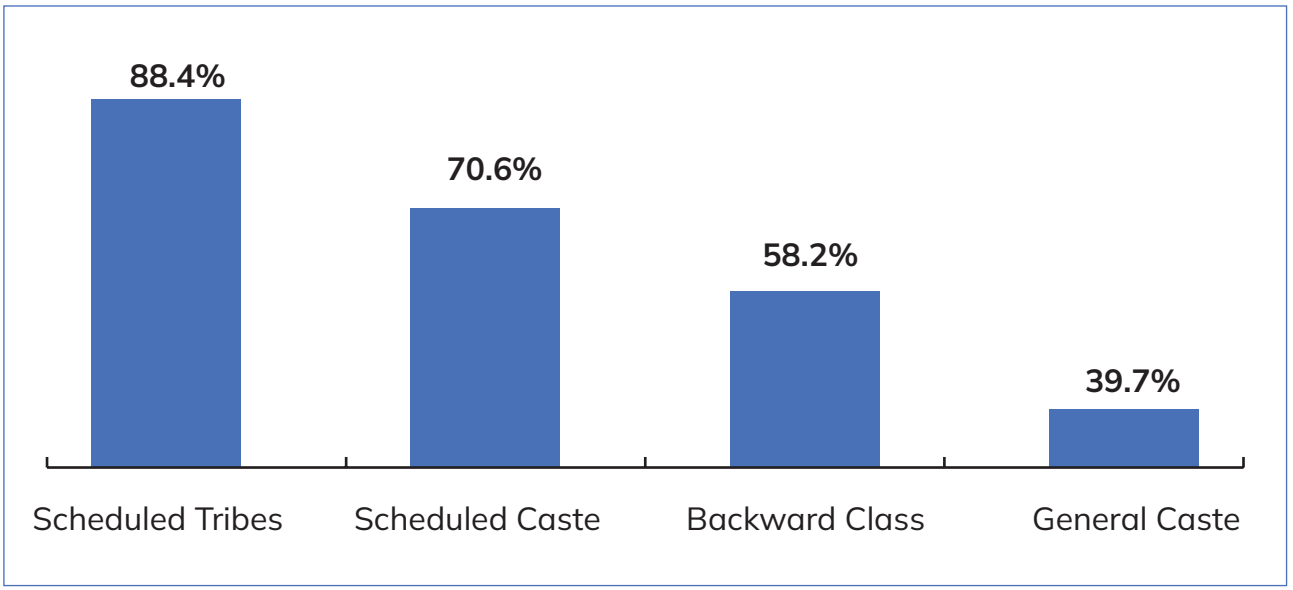


The pattern repeats in Living Conditions too. SCs, STs and BCs are far more backward than the General Caste. The backwardness distance between General Caste and SC/ST in Living Conditions is even greater than in education and occupation. There is a clear pattern by which education backwardness gets reflected in occupational backwardness which in turn shows up in living conditions. This chain starts at childhood and gets exacerbated as an individual grows.

Share of Participation across Parameters of Living Conditions

1. Over 88% of STs, over 2/3rds of SCs and half of BCs reside in Rural areas, while close to 2/3rds of General Castes reside in Urban areas.

Figure 18: Share of Rural Population by Social Category



Over 88.4% of Scheduled Tribes belong to rural areas, while over two-thirds (70.6%) of Scheduled Castes also reside in rural areas. A little more than half (58.2%) of Backward Classes are rural, indicating moderate urban presence.

On the other hand, close to two-thirds of General Castes (60.3%) are urban, as only 39.7% of them live in rural areas. This stark gradient highlights how urbanisation and access to urban opportunities are unequally distributed across social groups—Scheduled Tribes and Castes remain concentrated in rural and often underdeveloped areas, while General Castes are significantly more urbanised and better positioned to access modern amenities.

2. Proportion of General Caste (OC) households living in 3 or more rooms is twice that of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)

Figure 19: Share of Households having 3 or more rooms

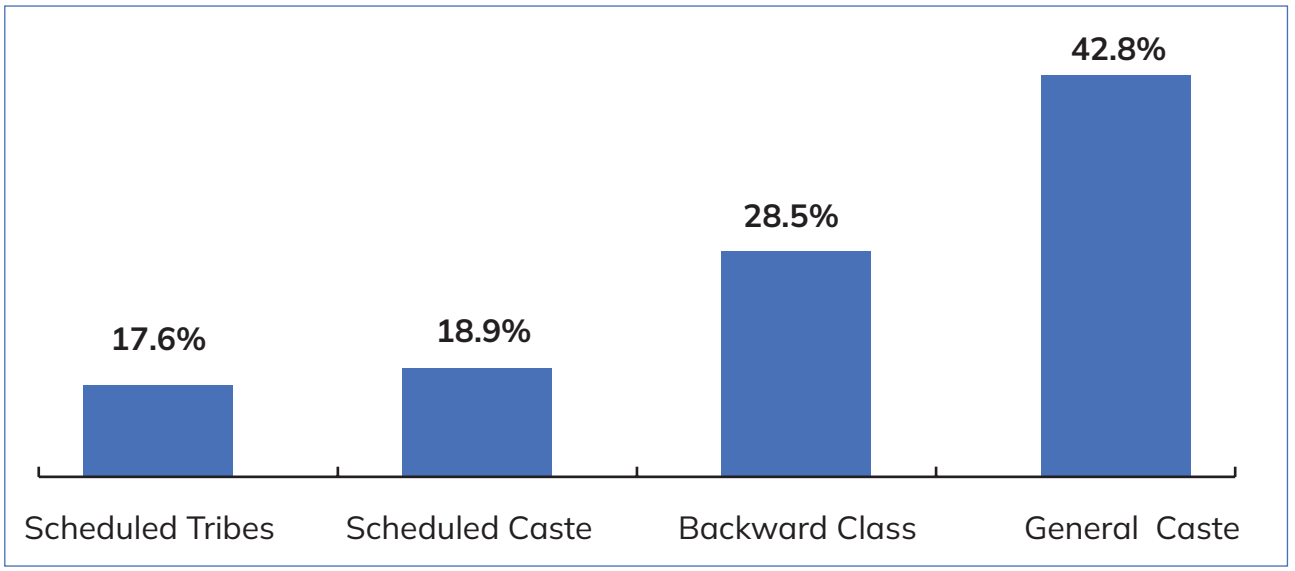
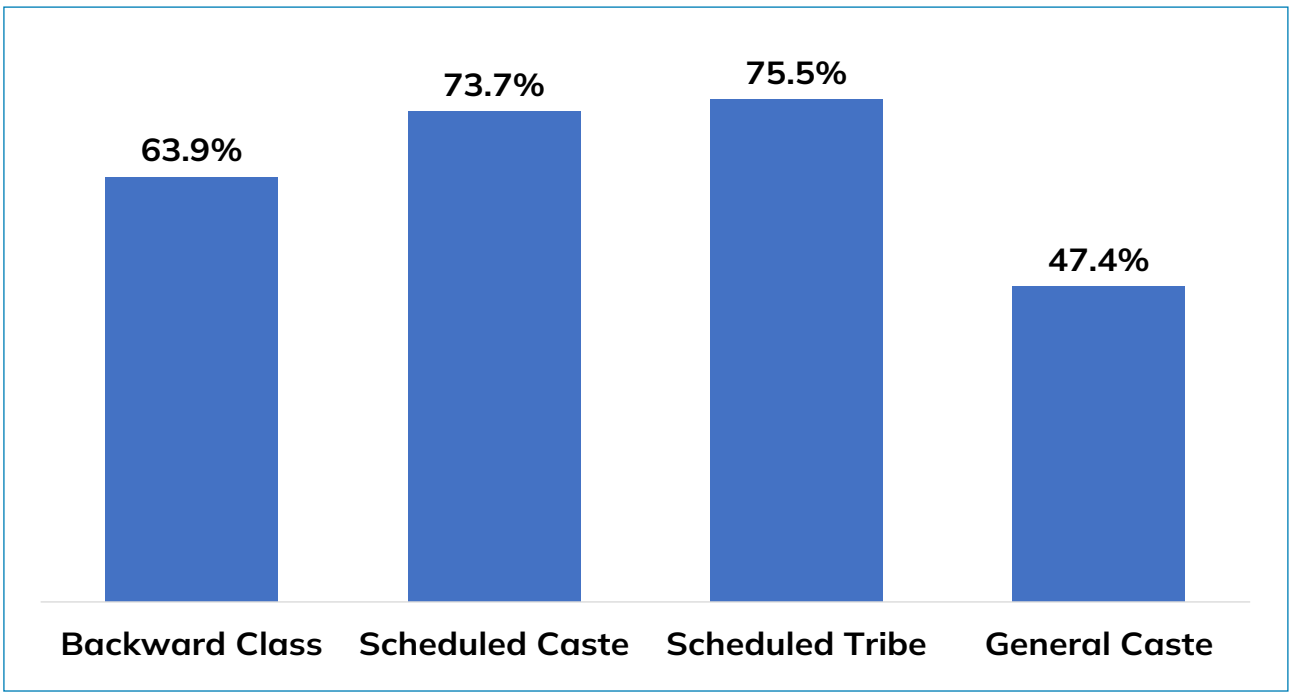


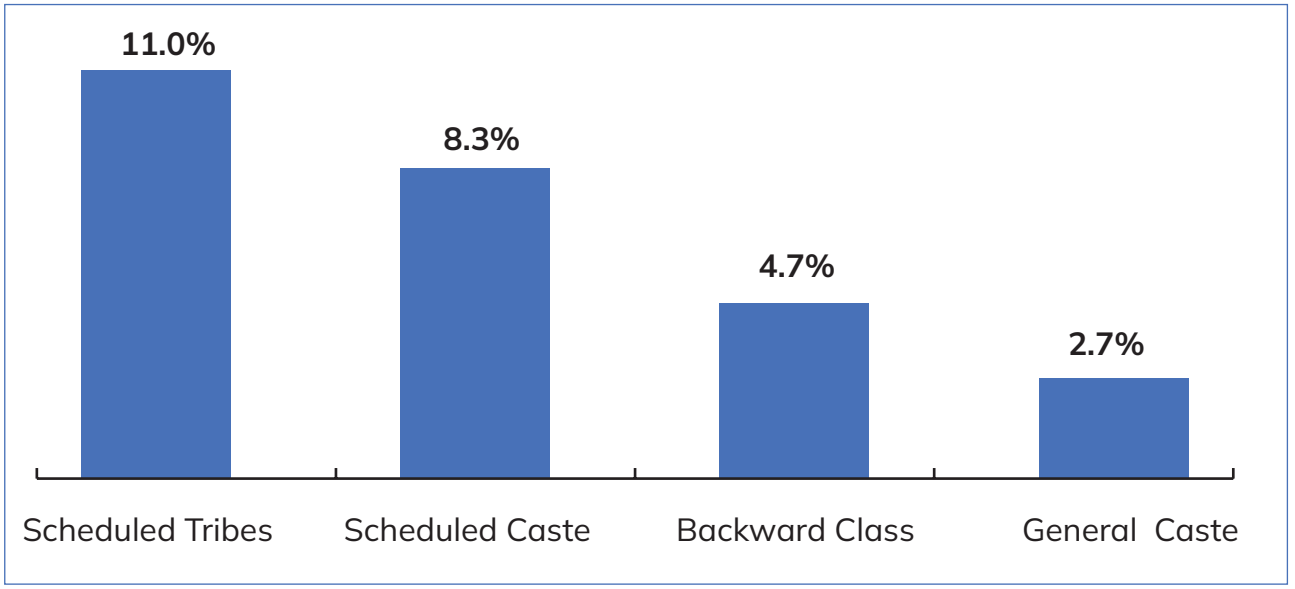
Figure 20: : Households with less than 2 rooms



The graph on households with two or fewer rooms is a strong indicator of housing deprivation, overcrowding, and limited space for healthy living. The state average stands at 63.5%, meaning nearly two-thirds of all households in Telangana live in cramped spaces. However, the distribution of this indicator varies sharply across caste groups.

3. The proportion of Scheduled Tribes (ST) households having no electricity is twice that of Telangana's average.

Figure 21: Share of Households having no electricity across Social Category



The graph on households with no electricity offers a striking insight into the persistence of basic infrastructure gaps across caste groups in Telangana. In the 21st century, electricity is no longer a luxury—it is a fundamental necessity. It powers homes, supports education and livelihoods, enables communication, and is essential for a dignified standard of living. Households lacking electricity often face extreme deprivation, with limited access to lighting, appliances, information, and digital connectivity. The state average of 5.8% of households without electricity is alarmingly high, indicating that many communities still live in energy poverty.

Scheduled Tribes (STs) are the most deprived in this regard, with 11% of households lacking electricity—nearly double the state average. This reflects their continued residence in remote, forested, or geographically isolated areas, where infrastructure development has historically lagged. Lack of electricity in these areas severely hampers education, health services, and economic activity.

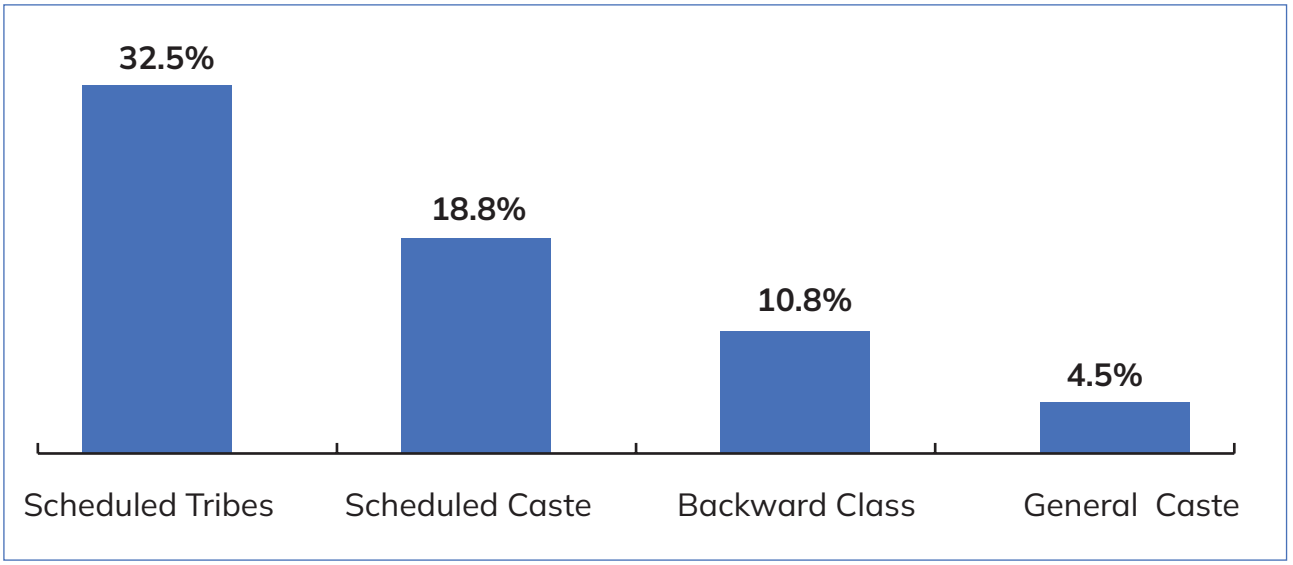
Scheduled Castes (SCs) follow with 8.3% of households without electricity, also above the state average. This highlights structural barriers and neglect in urban slums and rural SC settlements, where power access may be unstable or entirely absent.

Backward Classes (BCs) are slightly better off, with 4.7% of households lacking electricity—just below the state average. However, this still indicates significant deprivation, especially among the lower subgroups within the BC category.

In contrast, General Castes (OCs) are the least deprived, with only 2.7% of households without electricity. This underscores their better access to basic infrastructure and more secure housing conditions.

4. The proportion of Scheduled Tribes (ST) households having no toilets is five times that of Telangana's average.

Figure 22: Share of Households having no toilets across Social Category



The graph on households with no toilet is a stark reminder of the sanitation and health disparities that persist across caste groups in Telangana. The presence of a toilet within a household is not merely a convenience—it is a critical indicator of dignity, hygiene, women's safety, and access to basic public health infrastructure. The absence of toilets leads to open defecation, which increases the risk of disease, compromises environmental health, and disproportionately affects women and girls, who may face threats to privacy and safety.

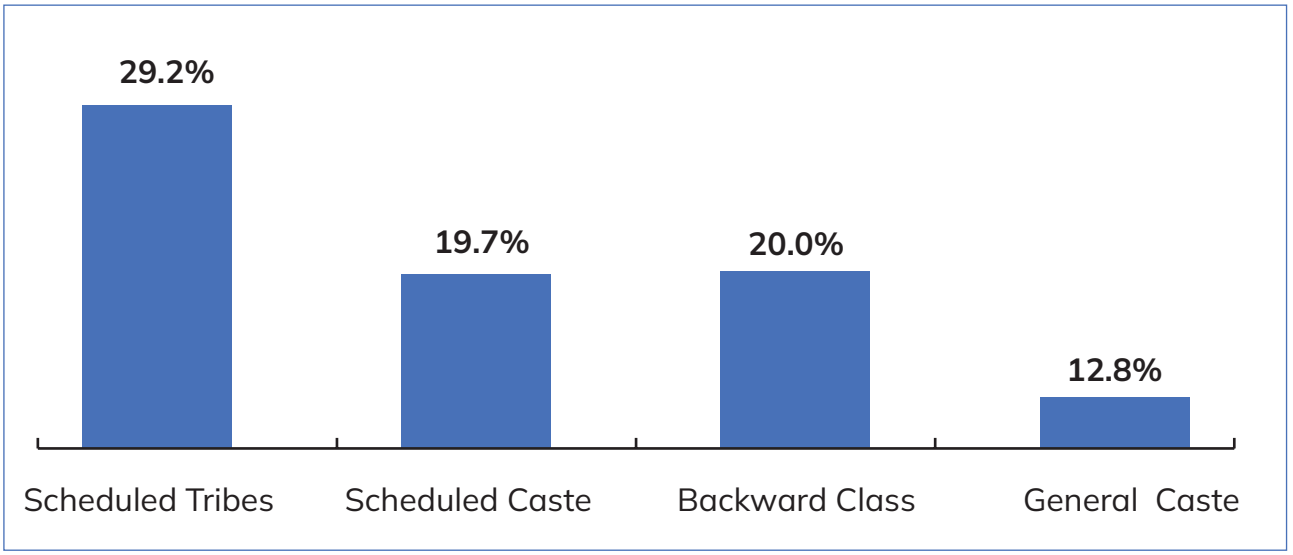
The state average of 13.3% households without a toilet highlights that a considerable portion of the population still lives without this essential facility. Scheduled Tribes (STs) are the most deprived, with a striking 32.5% of households lacking toilets. This reflects the severe infrastructure gaps in remote tribal settlements, where government sanitation schemes have had limited reach or implementation.

Scheduled Castes (SCs) also fare worse than the state average, with 18.8% of households lacking access to toilets. This underlines continued neglect of sanitation infrastructure in SC-dominated settlements, especially in rural areas or urban slums.

Backward Classes (BCs) show better access, with 10.8% of households without toilets—below the state average but still substantial. This suggests moderate progress, though the data indicates that many BC households continue to live in substandard sanitary conditions. General Castes (OCs) are the least deprived, with only 4.5% of households lacking toilets.

5. Households with No Tap Water

Figure 23: Share of Households having no tap water across Social Groups



The state average of households without tap water is 20%, yet the burden is not equally shared. Scheduled Tribes (STs) are the most deprived in this regard, with 29.2% of their households lacking tap water—significantly above the state average.

This highlights the infrastructural neglect and remoteness of tribal habitations. Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Backward Classes (BCs) fare slightly better but remain at the state average of 20%, indicating persistent inadequacies in basic amenities for these marginalized groups.

In contrast, only 12.8% of General Caste households lack tap water, reflecting their better access to piped water facilities, likely due to urban residence and socio-economic advantages.

LAND AND ASSETS BACKWARDNESS

Ownership of land and assets is a fundamental parameter in assessing social and economic backwardness in contemporary society. Unlike income, which can fluctuate over time, land and durable assets represent accumulated wealth, stability, and intergenerational advantage. The presence or absence of such assets reveals the legacy of privilege or exclusion that communities have inherited over time—particularly in contexts like India, where landholding and wealth accumulation have historically followed caste and class lines.

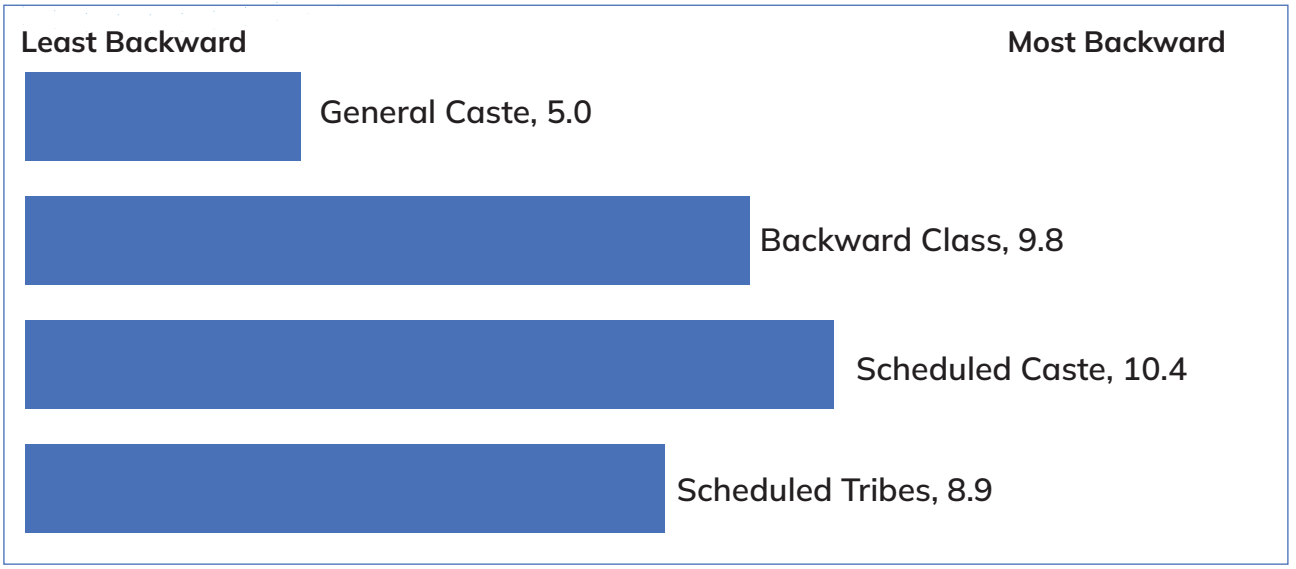
Land ownership is especially significant because it offers not only a source of income through agriculture or rental but also social status, economic security, and bargaining power. Households with larger or irrigated landholdings typically have better access to credit, markets, and state support, while those with no or marginal landholdings are more vulnerable to economic shocks and dependent on manual labor.

To holistically capture land ownership patterns, we assess the communities of Telangana along six key indicators: the proportion of households with land, the average irrigated land per household, and the distribution of landholding size—categorized into small (<5 acres), medium (5–20 acres), and large (>20 acres) holdings. These provide insights into not just land access but also the quality and productivity of the land owned.

In addition to immovable assets, we also examine key movable assets such as ownership of refrigerators and cars. These serve as markers of both basic living standards and discretionary purchasing power.

Land and Assets Backwardness Index of Social Groups

Figure 24: Land and Assets Backwardness

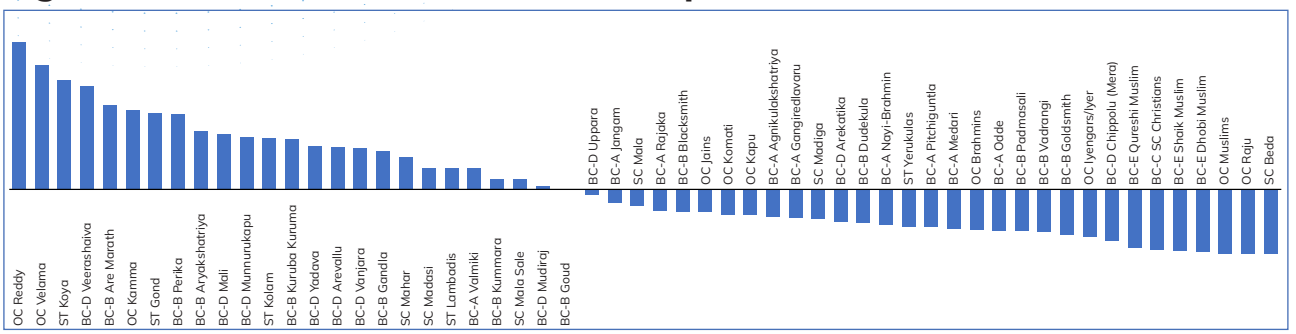


If there is one surprise or counter-intuitive finding from the SEEEPC Survey, it is in the Land & Assets parameter. The generally accepted notion is that ownership of land assets is the primary driver of economic disparities and overall backwardness of castes. The SEEEPC survey contradicts this notion. First, the disparities in land ownership between General Caste and the marginalised groups are not as large as in education, occupation and living conditions. Second, Scheduled Tribes, by virtue of large ownership of dry or fallow land, score better than Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes in this parameter. Third, mere ownership of land or being less backward in land parameter does not translate into reducing overall backwardness. There are several Backward Class castes that do not own much land such as Goldsmith caste or BC-Christians, yet they are far less backward overall, through education and occupation. The corollary of this is a BC caste like Kuruba Kuruma where a large majority of them own land, even if small land sizes, yet they are more backward overall.

It is important to note that there may be under or inaccurate reporting of land holdings in the SEEEPC survey since this is a self-reported exercise. But, if this pattern of under-reporting of land holdings was prevalent across all castes and social groups, then the CBI calculation which is a relative calculation would have neutralized these biases. If one believed that perhaps tribals were more honest in their land ownership reporting than other castes, then there could be an error in this analysis,. But in the absence of evidence of such bias for only one social group, it is reasonable to assume that the Land Backwardness analysis is reliable.

Land Ownership Distribution Across Major Castes

Figure 25: Share of Total Land Ownership across Castes



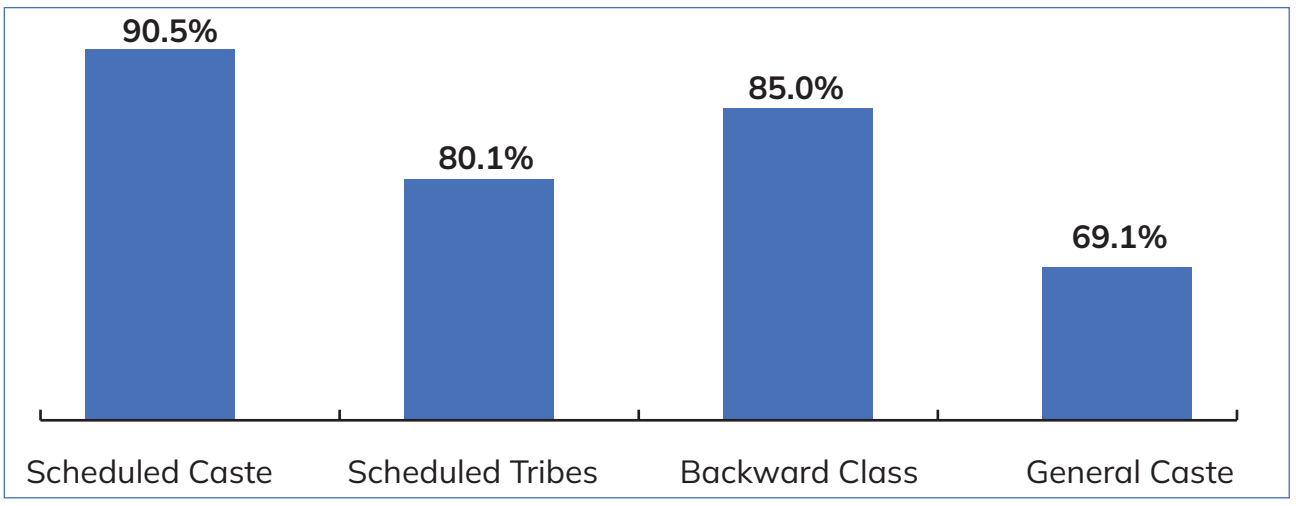
This graph depicts the relative share of total land ownership by caste groups in Telangana compared to their share of population. Bars rising above the baseline indicate that the caste owns a disproportionately higher share of land than its population share, while bars falling below the baseline show a lower share of land relative to their population size.

At the top, OC Reddys own the highest share of total land relative to their population indicating historical advantages in land accumulation followed by OC Velamas and ST Koya. In contrast, communities like SC Bedas, and OC Muslims have much less land ownership compared to their population share, reflecting their historical marginalization from land assets.

Share of Land and Asset Ownership across Social Categories

Scheduled Castes (SCs) have the highest proportion of small landholding households followed closely by Backward Classes (BCs)

Figure 26: Share of Small Landholdings by Social Category



The data on small land holdings offers important insights into the distribution of land ownership across caste groups in the state. With the state average of small

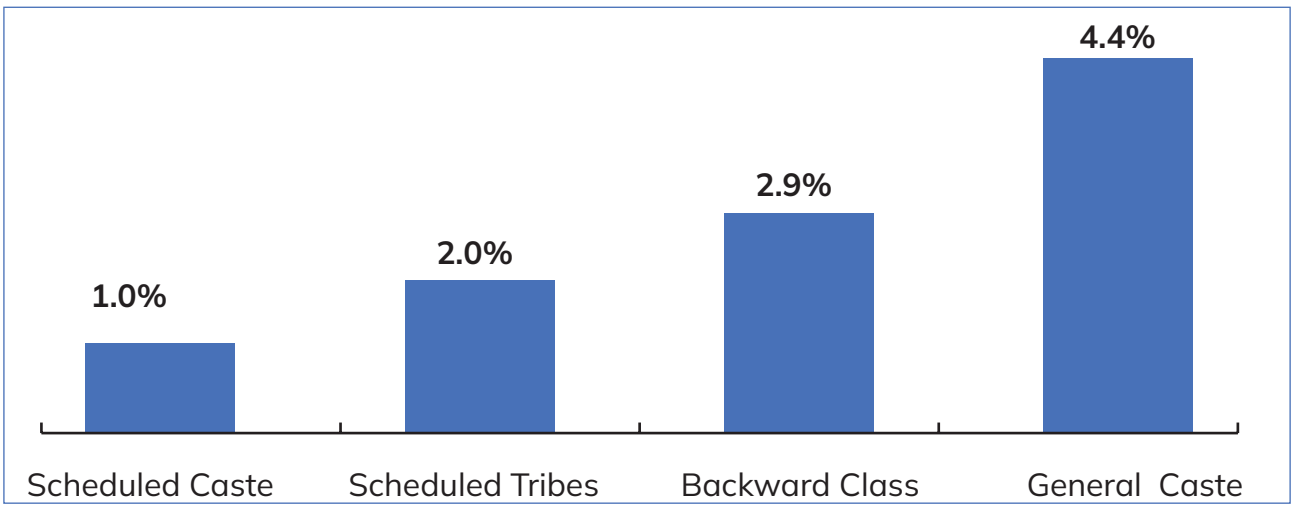
land holding per household at 80%, this indicator reflects the extent of land fragmentation, asset poverty, and economic vulnerability among communities.

Scheduled Castes (SCs) have the highest proportion of small landholding households at 90.5%, followed closely by Backward Classes (BCs) at 85%. This indicates that the majority of these communities are dependent on marginal and fragmented plots of land, which are often less productive, less irrigated, and economically unviable for sustaining agricultural livelihoods.

In contrast, General Castes (OCs) have the lowest share of households with small landholdings, at 69.1% , which is significantly below the state average. This indicates that a greater proportion of OC(General Caste) households own medium or large landholdings, giving them an advantage in agricultural productivity, asset accumulation, and financial stability.

General Castes (OCs) have over twice the proportion of large land holdings when compared to Scheduled Tribes (STs) who have the lowest share.

Figure 27: Share of Large Land by Social Category



This graph on families with landholdings greater than 20 acres reveals the stark disparities in the ownership of large agricultural land across caste groups in Telangana. Large landholdings often serve as a marker of intergenerational wealth, economic security, and social capital.

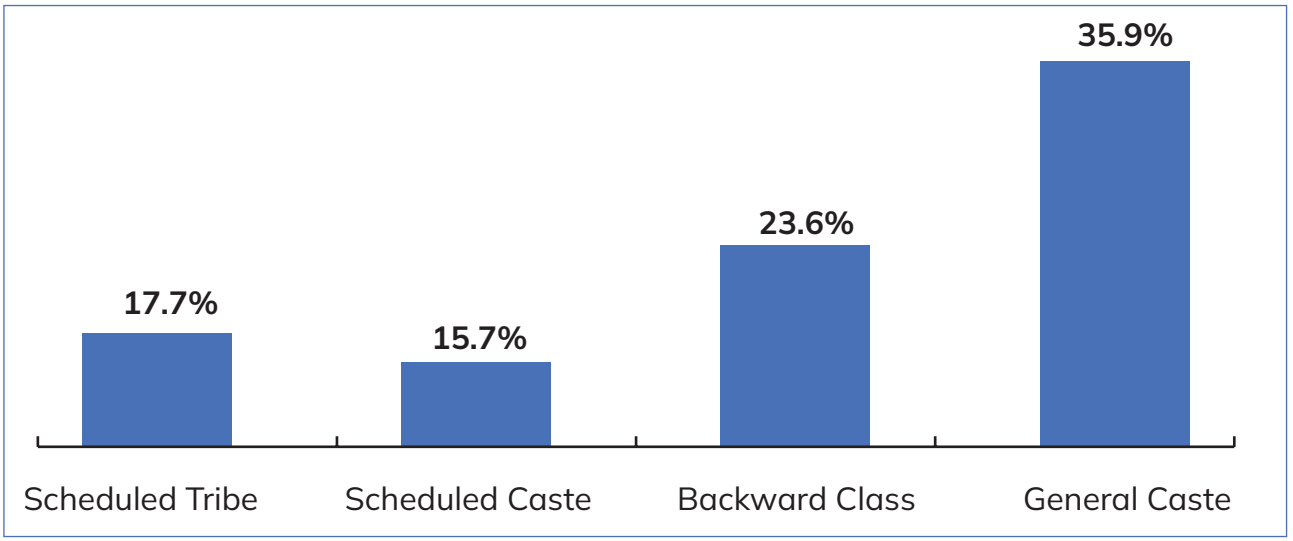
The data shows that 4.4% of households from the Other Castes category own more than 20 acres of land—the highest among all social groups. This indicates a significant accumulation of legacy assets and continued dominance in agrarian resources. In contrast, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes have 2%, and 2.9% of households in this category, suggesting relatively limited access to large-scale agricultural wealth. Scheduled Castes fare the worst, with just 1%

of families owning more than 20 acres, highlighting their marginalisation even in land ownership.

While the overall percentages are low across all groups, the comparative difference is telling—Other Castes are nearly twice as likely to own large tracts of land compared to Scheduled Tribes. This gap reflects long standing structural inequalities, as land continues to be a major source of both income and influence in rural economies.

Share of Household ownership of Refrigerator among General Castes (OCs) is twice that of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs)

Figure 28: Refrigerator Ownership by Social Category



The graph on household refrigerator ownership provides a clear picture of the economic divide across social categories in terms of access to basic yet essential household appliances. The state average for households owning a fridge is 20.4%.

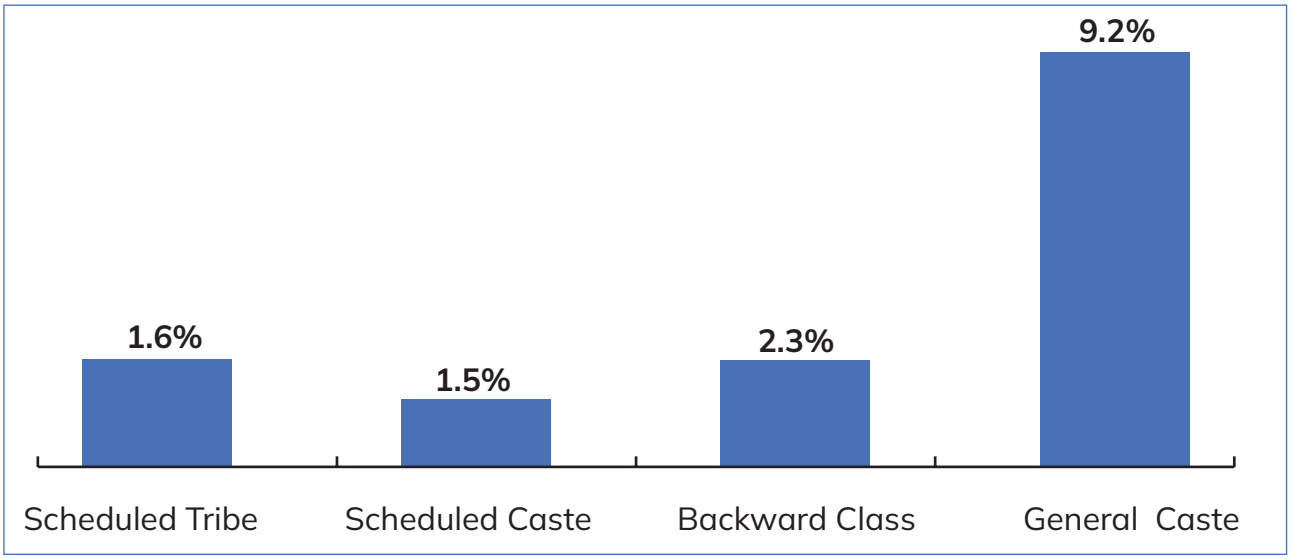
General Castes (OCs) have the highest proportion of fridge ownership, with 35.9% of households reporting access. This is well above the state average, suggesting better economic conditions, purchasing power, and household infrastructure within this group.

Backward Classes (BCs) follow with 23.6%, slightly above the state average. This indicates a moderate level of access, reflecting some upward mobility, yet a noticeable gap compared to OCs.

In contrast, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) remain below the state average, at 15.7% and 17.7% respectively. These lower figures point to continued economic vulnerability, and limited access to electricity and essential consumer goods.

Share of Other Caste (OC) Households owning a car is 3 times that of OBC and about 5 times that of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs)

Figure 29: Car Ownership by Social Category



The graph on household car ownership offers a compelling view of economic disparity across caste groups through the lens of access to high-value consumer assets. With a state average of 3.5%, this metric clearly illustrates which communities are more likely to afford such a luxury good.

General Castes (OCs) stand out prominently, with 9.2% of households owning a car, nearly three times the state average and backward classes (BCs). This reflects significantly higher levels of wealth, disposable income and credit access.

Backward Classes (BCs) are well below the state average, with only 2.3% of households owning a car. While slightly closer to the average, the figure still highlights limited affordability and access to non-essential, high-value goods.

The situation is worse for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), with only 1.5% and 1.6% of households, respectively, owning cars. These numbers indicate deep economic constraints, as these groups not only fall far below the state average but are also more likely to prioritize essential expenditures over discretionary purchases.

GENDER BACKWARDNESS

Measuring backwardness along the lines of Gender parameters are essential for assessing the backwardness of a community because they reveal how inclusive and progressive the society truly is. It is often said that the status of women reflects the overall maturity, equity, and development of a civilization. A community that denies women access to education, autonomy, health, and economic opportunities is likely to be socially and structurally backward in other dimensions as well.

Measuring factors such as the gender ratio, prevalence of female child marriage, and women's educational attainment sheds light on whether women enjoy dignity, freedom, and equal rights. These indicators show if women have the power to make decisions about their own lives—including marriage, education, career, and bodily autonomy—or if they remain bound by traditional restrictions.

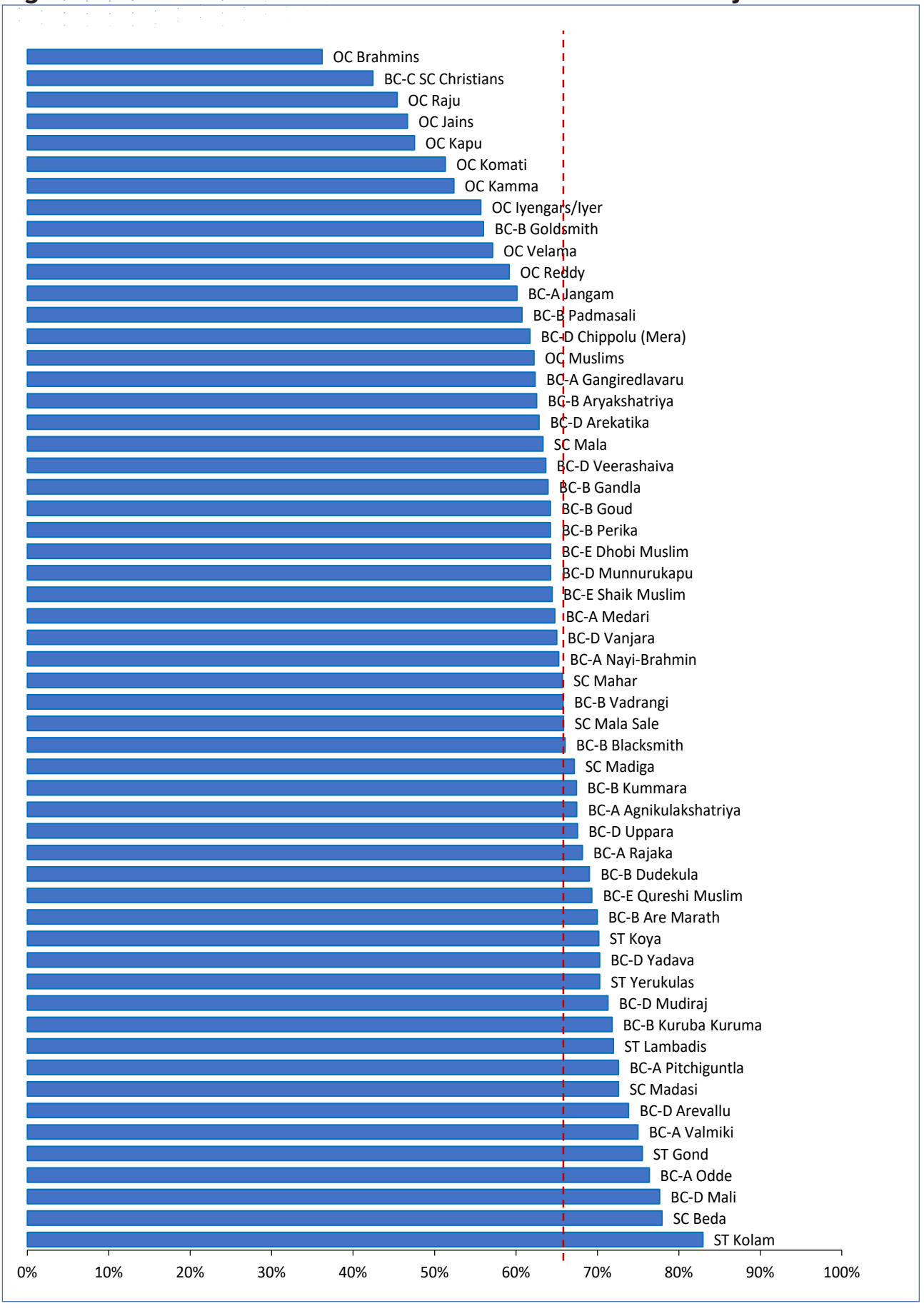
Further, a community where women are financially independent, better educated, and socially empowered is more likely to experience overall progress and well-being. Thus, gender is not just one of many dimensions—it is central to understanding the depth and nature of backwardness within any social group.

In Telangana, the average female-to-male ratio stands at 0.98. Interestingly, ST Gonds, ST Koyas, SC Malas and SC Madigas report a ratio greater than 1, while OC Iyengars/Iyers, OC Jains, OC Rajus and OC Muslims have a ratio much less than the state average of 0.98

With regards to girl child marriages in Telangana, 5% of girls or in other words 2.16 lakh girls below the age of 18 were found to be married. Among the major castes, the highest share of married girls below 18 were surprisingly among OC Iyengars/Iyers (21.2%)- which is 5 times the state average and OC Jains (11%) twice the state average.

Women Studied Below 10th

Figure 30: Share of Women studied below 10th across 56 major castes



This graph highlights the educational attainment of women across various castes in Telangana, specifically focusing on the share of women who have not studied beyond the 10th standard. The state average stands at 65.5%, which means nearly two-thirds of all women in Telangana have not progressed past secondary education.

At the extreme end of backwardness, ST Kolam women report the highest share at 83%, signaling extremely poor educational access and outcomes among tribal girls. Other marginalized communities such as SC Bedas, BC-D Malis, BC-A Oddes, and ST Gonds also show very high shares of women not studying beyond 10th, underlining systemic barriers to education.

On the other hand, the lowest proportions are seen among OC Brahmins (36.2%), indicating better educational attainment and access. They are closely followed by OC Rajus, OC Jains, OC Komatis, OC Kammas, and OC Iyengars/Iyers, all of whom fall significantly below the state average, reflecting their historically privileged socio-economic position. BC-C SC Christians, BC-B Goldsmith, following the overall trend and are relatively better on educational attainment in women.

Interestingly, most SC and ST groups are above the state average, reflecting continued educational deprivation, while a few exceptions like SC Mala women perform better than the state average, indicating intra-group diversity. This suggests targeted educational interventions are necessary for specific sub-castes to bridge this educational gap.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES: WHO BENEFITS AND WHO DOES NOT?

In Telangana, successive governments have implemented a broad array of welfare schemes aimed at alleviating poverty, enhancing social equity, and fostering inclusive development. These popular welfare programs such as Rythu Bharosa, Cheyutha Pensions, Rythu Bhima, Arogyasri, and the Housing Initiative have become integral pillars of the state's social policy landscape.

Since these welfare schemes form a crucial part of Telangana's social policy and receive a substantial share of the state budget, it is essential to assess their reach across different caste groups — identifying which castes are benefiting and which remain under served.

As part of the SEEEPC survey, households in Telangana were asked whether their household had benefited from any government welfare schemes in the preceding 5 years. Q) 43 'Mention the details of benefits received from the Government schemes for the past 5 years (up to 3 schemes can be entered)'

Table 11 : Households could indicate up to three schemes from the following list:

Code	Scheme Name	Description
01	No Benefit Availed	Household did not avail any welfare scheme in the past 5 years
02	Kalyana Lakshmi / Shaadi Mubarak	One-time marriage assistance to SC, ST, OBC, Minority families for daughter's marriage expenses
03	Cheyutha Pensions	Social security pensions for elderly, disabled, widows, and vulnerable groups
04	Rythu Bharosa	Direct income support to land-owning farmers, disbursed in two installments annually
05	Rythu Bhima	Life insurance coverage for farmers (landowners) in case of death
06	Arogyasri	Cashless health insurance for BPL households for major medical treatments
07	Free Electricity for Agriculture	Free power supply to agricultural pump sets (landholding farmers)

Code	Scheme Name	Description
08	Free Electricity for House (Gruha Jyothi)	Free domestic electricity up to a 200 units(for residential households)
09	Subsidized LPG Cylinder (Mahalakshmi)	Provision of LPG cylinders at subsidized rates for eligible families
10	Free Bus Travel for Women (Mahalakshmi)	Free bus transportation for women commuters within the state
11	Government Allotted House	Free or subsidized government housing allotments for landless or vulnerable groups
12	Crop Loan Waive-off	State-funded waiver of outstanding crop loans for eligible farmers
00	Others	Any other state scheme not listed above

List of Welfare Schemes

These welfare schemes listed in the SEEEPC survey can be categorised as follows, based on their primary target groups:

A. Agriculture-linked Incentives / Benefits (targeted only to landed farmers or households with agricultural land records)

- Rythu Bharosa
- Rythu Bhima
- Free Electricity for Agriculture
- Crop Loan Waive-off

B. Social Security Schemes (open to all eligible BPL and vulnerable households, regardless of occupation or landholding):

- Government Allotted House
- Cheyutha Pensions
- Arogyasri
- Subsidized LPG Cylinder (Mahalakshmi)
- Free Bus Travel for Women (Mahalakshmi)
- Free Electricity for House (Gruha Jyothi)

C. Kalyana Lakshmi / Shaadi Mubarak

- Kalyana Lakshmi / Shaadi Mubarak

D. Others:

- No Benefit Availed (Code 01) — baseline for exclusion analysis.
- Others (Code 00) — miscellaneous or newer schemes not captured above.

About 2 crore individuals i.e. 55% of the total state population reported 'No Benefit Availed'. It is then reasonable to presume that 45% of the population of Telangana received some welfare benefit which is consistent with India's overall welfare policy.

Welfare Schemes Budget Allocation

Table 12: Welfare Schemes Budget Allocation

S No	Scheme	Budget Allocation (FY 2026, ₹ crore)
1	Rythu Bharosa	18,000
2	Cheyutha Pensions	14,861
3	Free Power for Agriculture	8,260
4	Free Bus Travel for Women (Mahalakshmi)	4,305
5	Kalyana Lakshmi / Shaadi Mubarak	3,683
6	Gruha Jyothi (Free Electricity for Households)	2,080
7	Rythu Bhima	1,466
8	Aarogyasri	1,143
9	Free LPG Cylinder (Mahalakshmi)	723
	Total	**54,521**
10	Government Housing (one-time)	22,000
11	Crop Loan Waiver (one time)	26,684
	Total	**1,03,205**

Of the ₹54,521 crores that is allocated annually for welfare, close to 75% of it goes towards Rythu Bharosa, Cheyutha and Free Power. Other important welfare schemes such as Free Bus Travel for Women (7.7%) and Kalyana Lakshmi/Shaadi Mubarak (6.6%) receive comparatively smaller allocations. Flagship programs like Free Electricity for Households (3.7%), Aarogyasri (2.0%), and Free LPG Cylinder (1.3%) receive minor shares.

Apart from this, Government housing has a total allocation of 22,000 crores and Crop loan waiver has a one time allocation of ₹ 26,684 crores.

Farm support forms the largest share of total allocations, with Rythu Bharosa and Crop loan waiver together consuming nearly 60% of welfare spending. Subsidized electricity (both agriculture and domestic) collectively accounts for over 18% of funds.

30% of Welfare Beneficiaries Belong to Relatively More Prosperous Castes

The idea of welfare is rooted in the principle of supporting the most backward and marginalised communities. Welfare schemes are designed and targeted specifically to address the socio-economic vulnerabilities of these groups, aiming to reduce inequality and enable access to basic amenities, livelihoods, and social security.

In this context, to meaningfully assess the fairness and reach of government welfare delivery, this analysis focuses on 135 castes (of the 242) whose CBI score is above the state average of 81, and thereby identifying them as the most deprived sections of the state.

There are 2.54 crore beneficiaries (not unique) of these 11 Welfare schemes which together cost ₹ 1.03 lakh crores.

Table 13: Beneficiaries of welfare schemes: Highest to Lowest

S No	Scheme	Total Beneficiaries	Share of Households / Population
1	Free Bus Travel for Women	1,01,67,424	58%
2	Gruha Jyothi: Free electricity to home	42,98,169	38%
3	Rythu Bharosa	30,62,749	27%
4	Cheyuta Pension	23,29,083	21%
5	Subsidised LPG Cylinder	18,62,461	17%
6	Arogyasri	12,00,208	11%
7	Crop Loan Waiver	10,82,041	10%
8	Free Electricity: Agriculture	6,49,540	6%
9	Kalyana Lakshmi/Shadi Mubarak	4,18,156	2%
10	Rythu Bhima	2,27,898	2%
11	Govt House	1,55,950	1%

The critical question here is how many of the 2.54 crore beneficiaries come from these identified 135 most backward castes and how much of this 1 lakh+ crore is being directed to the most deserving.

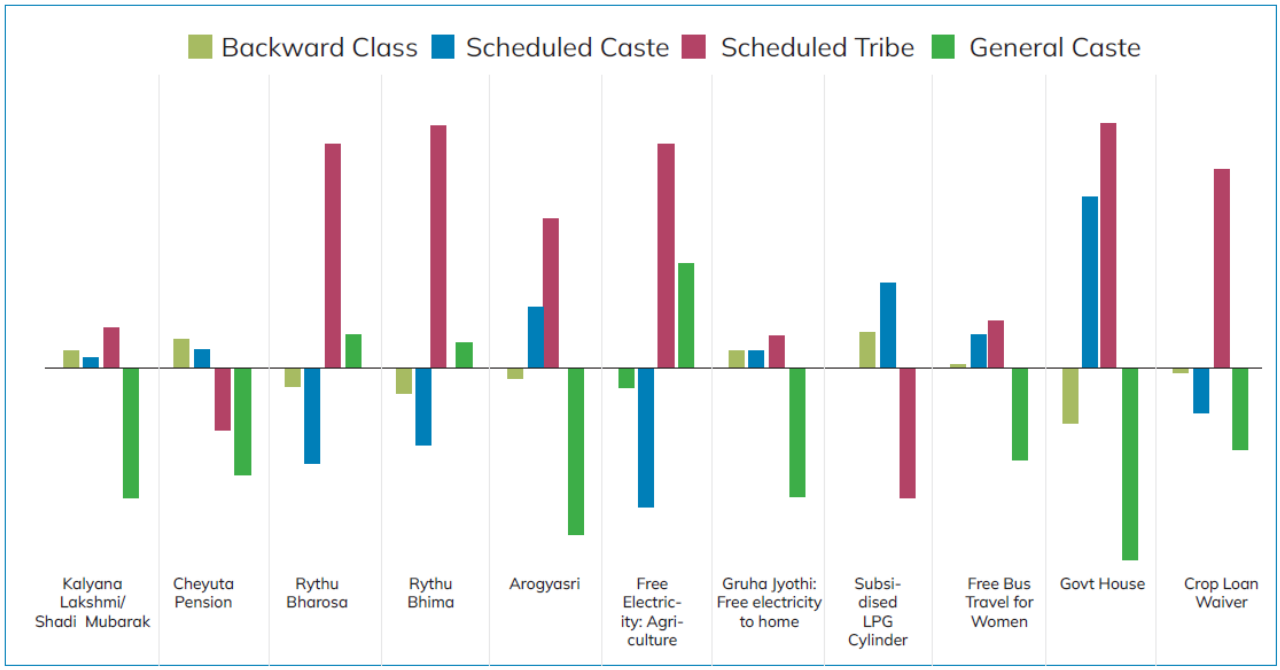
Table 14: Classification of backward castes among Total Beneficiaries

Total Beneficiaries	2.54 crores
135 more backward castes	1.80 crores
Share of 135 more backward castes	71%
Share of less backward castes	29%

On an average, over 70% of the beneficiaries of these 11 welfare schemes come from these 135 most backward castes. This implies that about 30% of the beneficiaries are the castes which are less backward or in other words have CBI less than 81 the state average.

To further meaningfully assess the delivery of government schemes, we assess whether the beneficiaries of these 11 welfare schemes are proportional to social groups. These 135 most backward castes together represent about 67% of Telangana's population, comprising 58.6% Backward Classes (BCs), 18.2% Scheduled Castes (SCs), 10.9% Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 12.4% General Castes (OCs).

Figure 31: Govt. Welfare Schemes: Who benefits more?



This is a striking graph that provides an insightful analysis of how these social groups—BCs (light green), SCs (blue), STs (purple), and OCs (green)—benefit from 11 major government welfare schemes relative to their share in the population. Bars extending upwards indicate disproportionate benefits (benefiting more than their population share), while bars below show under-benefits (benefiting less than their population share).

For example, Scheduled Castes form only 14% of the share of Rythu Bharosa beneficiaries; while they make up 18.2% of the total population of 135 most backward castes, making them less benefitted in relation to their population share.

Across most schemes, Scheduled Tribes (STs), whose CBI score is high 95, significantly benefit more, especially in schemes like Rythu Bharosa, Rythu Bhima, Free Power for Agriculture, and Government Housing, reflecting their high economic vulnerability and dependence on agricultural and state support. But for Cheyutha pensions, where STs benefit less compared to their share of population, Free Bus Travel for Women and Subsidized LPG Cylinders, are also notable schemes where STs benefit more.

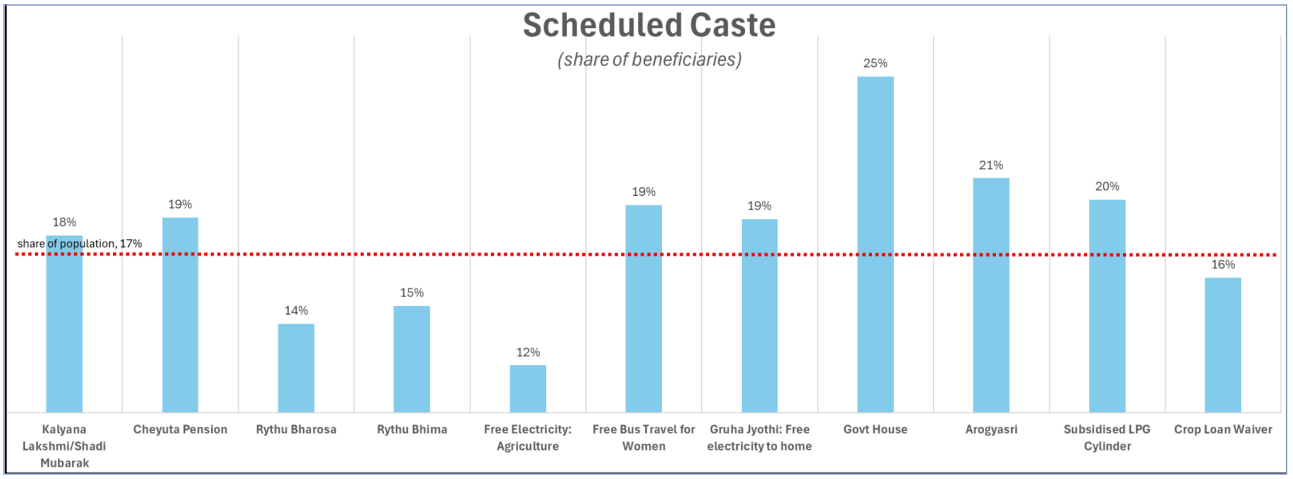
Scheduled Castes (SCs), whose CBI score is highest 96, also generally benefit more in schemes such as Free Housing and Free Bus Travel for Women, suggesting targeted welfare access. However, in agricultural-linked incentive schemes like Rythu Bharosa and Free Power for Agriculture, SCs are under-represented, likely due to lower land ownership patterns among them.

On the other hand, General Castes (OCs), whose CBI score is least at 31 and are least backward among all social groups, have a smaller share of beneficiaries in almost all welfare schemes except for Rythu Bharosa and Free Power for Agriculture, where their historical landholding advantage gives them access. Their low presence in social security and welfare schemes reflects their better economic standing but also suggests lesser state support in these areas.

Backward Classes (BCs), whose CBI score is 86, show mixed patterns; while they benefit more from Cheyutha Pensions and Kalyana Lakshmi, they are slightly under-represented in critical schemes like Rythu Bharosa and Free Electricity for agriculture, indicating possible gaps in agricultural asset ownership within this group.

Are Welfare Benefits Fairly Distributed Across Social Categories?

Figure 32: Scheduled Castes (SCs) benefit in large proportion from Government housing, Aarogyasri and LPG cylinder subsidy



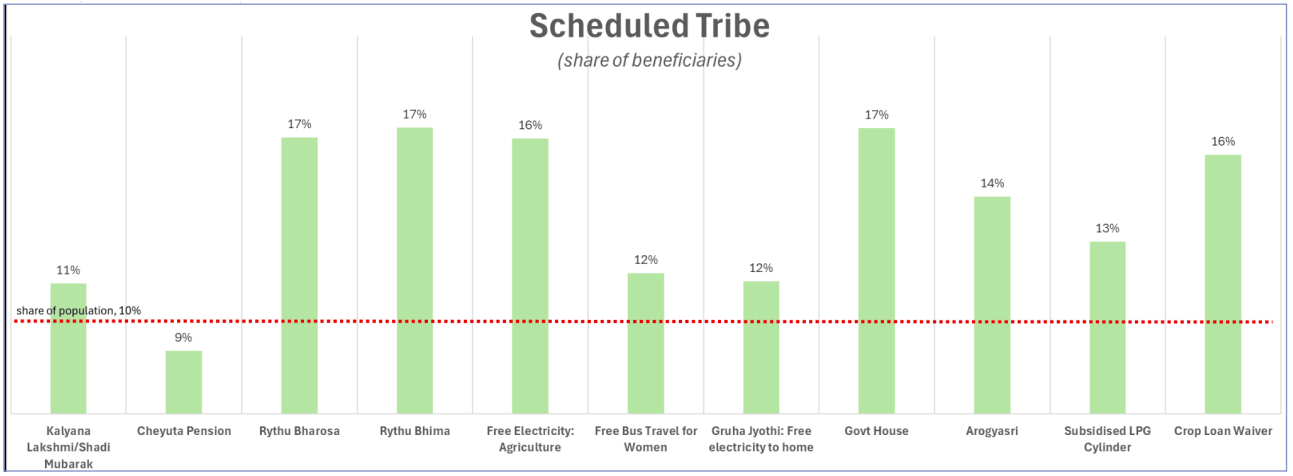
This graph analyses the share of Scheduled Caste (SC) beneficiaries across major welfare schemes in Telangana, benchmarked against their population share of 17% (indicated by the red dotted line). Bars above the line reflect over-benefit, while those below indicate under-benefit in relation to population share.

SCs who have the highest overall average CBI score of 96, show notable over-representation in schemes aimed at basic needs and public services. The most significant inclusion is seen in Government Housing, where SCs account for 25% of beneficiaries—well above their population share. They are also fairly over-represented in Aarogyasri (21%), Free Bus Travel for Women (19%), Gruha Jyothi (19%), Subsidized LPG Cylinder (20%), and Cheyutha Pension (19%), showing a relatively stronger benefit from schemes improving health, mobility, domestic energy access, and old-age pensions.

Moderate benefit is seen in Kalyana Lakshmi/Shadi Mubarak (18%), just above population share.

However, under-benefit is observed in Rythu Bharosa (14%), Rythu Bhima (15%), Free Electricity for Agriculture (12%), and Crop Loan Waiver (16%)—all key schemes linked to agriculture and farming support. This indicates either limited agricultural land ownership or structural exclusion from such farming-centric welfare. In summary, SCs benefit more in urban and household-based welfare schemes, while they appear to lag behind in agriculture-related schemes.

Figure 33: Scheduled Tribes (STs) benefit in large proportion from most welfare schemes but for Cheyutha Pensions



This graph shows the share of Scheduled Tribe (ST) beneficiaries across key welfare schemes in Telangana, benchmarked against their population share of 10% (denoted by the red dotted line). Bars rising above the red line reflect over-representation, while those below reflect under-representation in relation to their population share.

STs, who have among the highest overall average CBI score of 95, benefit substantially more from most welfare schemes. In agriculture-related schemes both Rythu Bharosa, Rythu Bhima, they make up 17% of the beneficiaries—well above their population share. They also appear significantly over-represented in Free Electricity for Agriculture (16%), Crop Loan Waiver (16%), and Government Housing (17%), which suggests their high dependence on farming and housing support.

Moderate benefit is seen in schemes such as Aarogyasri (14%), Subsidized LPG (13%), Gruha Jyothi (12%), and Free Bus Travel for Women (12%)—all showing over-representation but not by a wide margin.

However, under-benefit is seen in Cheyutha Pension, where STs comprise only 9% of beneficiaries, falling below their population share. Kalyana Lakshmi/Shadi Mubarak shows marginal inclusion (11%), just slightly above the average.

In summary, STs are better covered under land, housing, and agriculture-centric welfare schemes, reflecting their agrarian livelihoods. Their under-representation in pension-related schemes like Cheyutha points to either gaps in elderly social security access or structural exclusion.

Figure 34: Backward Class (BCs) benefit in large proportion from most welfare schemes but for Government Housing

This graph presents the share of Backward Class (BC) beneficiaries across ten key welfare schemes in Telangana, measured against their population share of 54.2% (represented by the red-dotted line). Bars rising above the red line indicate that BCs are benefitting more than their share of population, while bars below it suggest under-benefit.

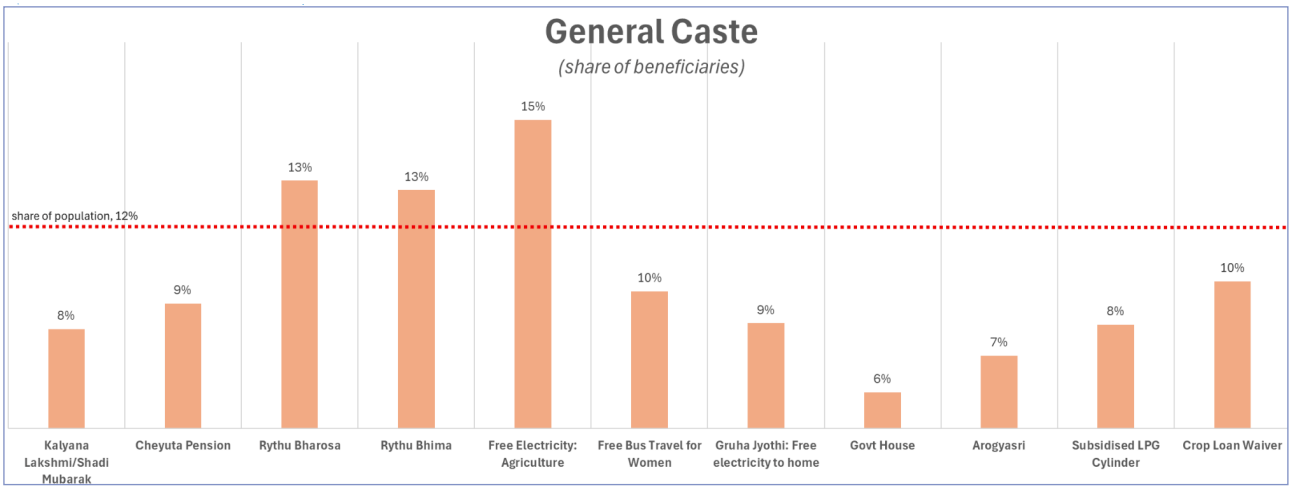
BCs, who have a high overall average CBI score of 86, show clear over-representation in several major schemes. Their highest share is in Cheyutha Pensions (62%), followed by Gruha Jyothi: Free electricity to homes (60%), Free Bus Travel for Women (58%), Crop Loan Waiver (58%), and Subsidized LPG Cylinder (58%). These figures suggest that BCs are reaping considerable benefits from schemes that support rural households, women, agriculture, and energy access.

Moderate over-benefit is seen in Kalyana Lakshmi/Shadi Mubarak (59%), Aarogyasri (56%), Free Electricity for Agriculture (55%), and Rythu Bhima (55%), showing consistent yet slightly above-average inclusion.

However, under-representation is noticeable in Government Housing, where BCs account for only 50% of the beneficiaries, despite forming over half the population. This may indicate limited access to housing-related subsidies or exclusion in urban settlement programs.

Overall, BCs tend to benefit equitably or slightly more across most schemes, especially those targeting agriculture, pensions, energy, and social security.

Figure 35: General Castes (OCs) benefit in larger proportion from Agriculture related welfare schemes



This graph displays the share of General Caste (OC) beneficiaries across various welfare schemes in Telangana, compared to their population share of 12% (indicated by the red dotted line). Bars above the red line represent over-benefit, and those below signify under-benefit relative to their population.

Despite their very low overall average CBI score (31), OCs are over-represented in Free Electricity for Agriculture (15%), Rythu Bhima (13%), and marginally in Rythu Bharosa (13%). This indicates better access to land-based benefits and agricultural support schemes—suggesting significant land ownership among major OC(General Caste) castes like Reddys.

In all other schemes, however, OCs benefit less than their population share. Notably, schemes focused on household welfare and women—such as Kalyana Lakshmi/Shadi Mubarak (8%), Cheyutha Pension (9%), Free Bus Travel (10%), and Gruha Jyothi (9%)—show modest OC(General Caste) inclusion. The lowest representation is in Government Housing (6%), followed by Aarogyasri (7%) and Subsidized LPG (8%).

The distribution of beneficiaries across castes, for all the 11 welfare schemes is attached in APPENDIX 4: WELFARE SCHEMES: DO THE MOST BACKWARD CASTES BENEFIT?

THE 'NO CASTE' STORY

One of the most significant and unexpected findings of the SEEEPC Survey is the emergence of a large and diverse group of citizens who identify as having "No Caste." Nearly 12 lakh individuals—now the 10th largest community in Telangana—chose to not identify in the conventional caste labels, opting instead for a civic identity beyond caste categories. Who are these citizens? The survey data offers an intriguing profile: predominantly urban, relatively well-educated, and highly represented in professional and merit-based sectors. Yet even as they assert caste neutrality, they continue to operate within institutional structures where caste remains a determining factor for access to rights, opportunities, and recognition, often exposing contradictions between claimed identity and systemic privilege - and revealing patterns where detachment from caste identity typically occurs after individuals have attained a certain degree of social and economic privilege. This chapter examines the rise of this caste-neutral identity and its implications on Telangana social fabric.

Who is the 'No Caste'?

SEEEPC data shows that the average "No Caste" person in Telangana today is an urban, English-educated professional living in Hyderabad's extended metropolitan region. They are typically graduate-educated, employed in elite government services (IAS/IPS, Central or State Group I/II) or urban private sectors such as software, BPO, or medicine. Their household is generally middle to upper-middle income, residing in pucca housing, with limited reliance on public welfare. While publicly caste-neutral, 43% of them claim to possess a caste certificate and may have previously accessed reservation benefits (13.5%). Their profile reflects a trajectory of mobility shaped by caste-linked pathways, now navigating institutional and professional spaces where caste neutrality is selectively performed but not structurally absolute.

The Origins of 'No Caste'

The Telangana Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste (SEEEPC) Survey introduced a new classification category "No Caste" and assigned the code 999. Though grouped under the broader Other Castes (OC) or General category, this represents a sociologically distinct social group. This inclusion by the Telangana state government was in response to a writ petition requesting recognition of caste-neutral categories like "No Caste," "No Religion," and "No Social Category." Based on the The High Court interim direction and also several representations to the Government, in adherence to the Article 15 (1) of that Constitution of India, which guarantees the freedom of the individual to live without proclaiming one's own Caste, or the Religion, the government included "No Caste and No Religion" categories in the enumeration manual with necessary codes.

However, the Expert Group, after a considerable discussion felt that the 'No Caste' group and "Others" (whose enumeration happened in the cases of households whose caste names are not in any category provided in the manual with a code) cannot be clubbed with computation of OC(General Caste) population of Telangana, as it is not known what castes actually they belong to. They must be treated as a separate category altogether.

1,196,482 individuals—in a state of approximately 3.55 crore—opted to identify as "No Caste." They are the 10th largest as a standalone community in the State Population. This significant demographic shift prompts questions about identity, access, and state classification systems. Additionally, individuals whose caste names were not found in the official list were recorded under the "Others" category. This included labor migrants, non-listed sub-castes, or those with mismatched caste data.

A striking 3.4% of the state's population—chose to identify as "No Caste". The emergence of "No Caste" reflects an evolving pattern of identity assertion within the caste framework of Telangana. While some individuals may view it as a marker of modern civic identity or personal mobility, the data suggests that caste detachment often fades into a familiar and established trajectory of (dominant castes') social and economic advancement. Despite formal rejection of caste labels, these individuals continue to engage with institutional systems where caste remains deeply embedded, producing both contradictions and visible correlations to privilege. The phenomenon raises important questions about how caste-neutral identification is situated within existing structures of recognition, opportunity, and entitlement.

Social Composition: Who Can Opt Out

The "No Caste" group can include a range of cohorts - whose decision to reject caste identification often aligns with their social positioning and mobility. These include children of inter-caste marriages, particularly in urban contexts; certain religious minorities—such as segments of Muslims and Jains—who do not traditionally identify with the Hindu caste system; and educated, urban individuals, many of whom have attained social and economic advancement and now perceive caste identity as either limiting or unnecessary for their current professional and civic positioning.

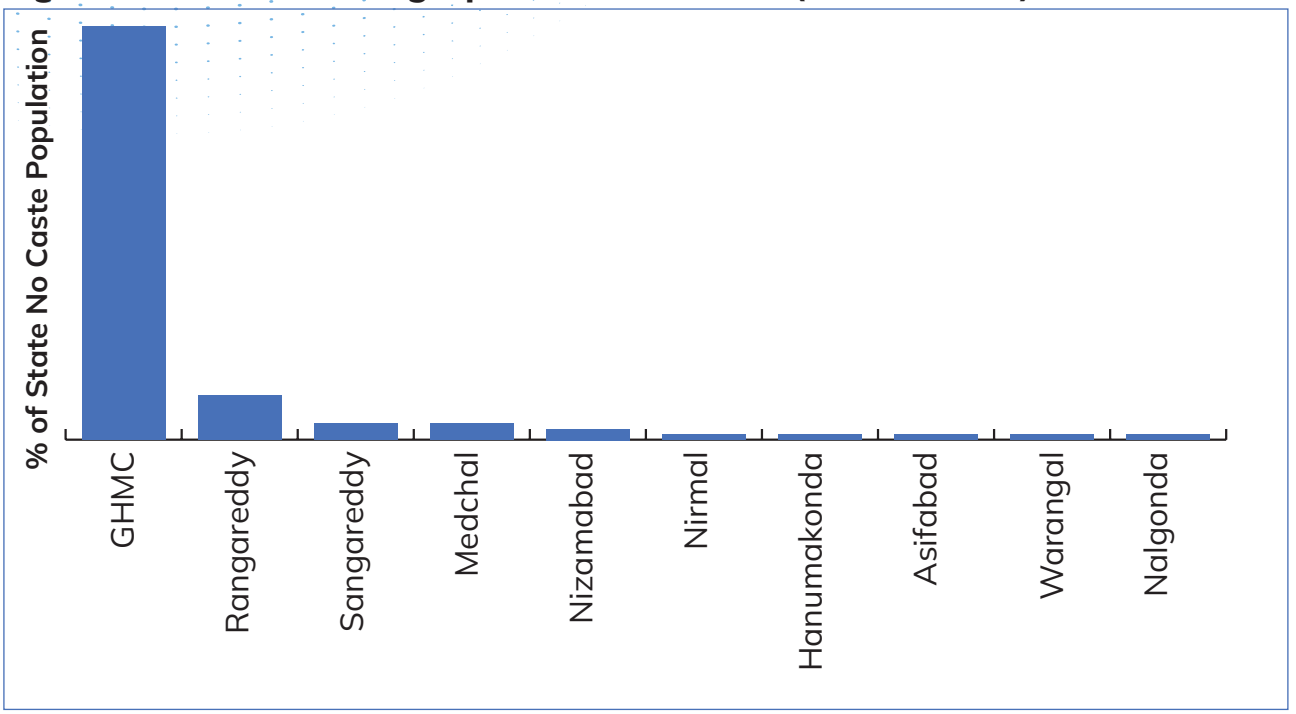
Individuals from lower castes who have progressed economically and socially and now they want to detach from their caste identity due to stigma or it might bring questions on their capability or someone might look down upon or patronise them.

This group represents a complex and evolving response to the caste-based architecture of Indian governance and public services. While some members may be attempting to move beyond caste affiliations, this trend also reflects deeper tensions—between personal autonomy and structural imposition, between aspirational identity and institutional classification. Or the privileged Castes do not want to accept their privilege of access to education and exposure had given them an unfair advantage so they are choosing to detach from castes, while lower castes need to claim and advertise their lower social status in spite of insults and stigma to get anywhere remotely near the Dominant castes.

Spatial Dynamics of Caste Detachment

The concentration of "No Caste" identification in urban areas suggests a correlation with patterns of mobility, access, and institutional positioning. Over 73% of this population resides within GHMC limits, with another 13% in surrounding districts. Smaller representations are found in Nizamabad, Nirmal, and Hanamkonda, while rural districts such as Khammam, Kamareddy, and Siddipet show the lowest concentrations. This spatial profile supports the interpretation that "No Caste" identification is enabled by the anonymity, exposure, and fluid social contexts more commonly found in urban regions.

Figure 36: No Caste Geographic Concentration (District-wise)



How 'No Caste' Compares Across Key Indicators

This section draws upon caste-disaggregated data from the SEEEPC Survey, comparing the "No Caste" group with both Other Castes (OC) and state averages across key social, educational, economic, housing, financial, and welfare indicators. The group exhibits a hybrid profile—marked by urban concentration, educational mobility, and professional engagement—while simultaneously displaying uneven access to welfare schemes and ongoing experiences of social exclusion.

Educational Indicators

In educational attainment, 30.2% of the No Caste group have completed education at the primary level or below, which is lower than the state average of 38.1%, suggesting relatively better early-stage educational attainment within this group. At the level of education up to Intermediate, 42.4% of No Caste individuals fall in this category, compared to 56.4% at the state level. This may point to a smaller share of population in this group remaining at the mid-level education stage. In the Diploma or above category, 36.8% of the No Caste group have attained higher qualifications, marginally higher than the state average of 36.3%. This indicates that the share of higher education attainment is roughly comparable to the state average.

Regarding school type, 25.2% of the No Caste group attended state government schools, which is lower than the state average of 39.5%. Meanwhile, 25.9% of No Caste individuals attended private schools, which is significantly higher than

the state average of 9.8%. This suggests a greater reliance on private schooling and ability to manage related increases in edu costs, within this group. In terms of English medium education among individuals below the age of 30, 48.5% of the No Caste population have studied in English medium, which is slightly above the state average of 47.0%. This indicates a marginally higher exposure to English medium education for the younger population in this group.

Employment & Income Indicators

Among the No Caste population in the 21–65 age group, 11.4% are engaged in daily wage work, which is considerably lower than the state average of 31.3%. This suggests that a smaller proportion of the No Caste group is dependent on insecure daily wage employment compared to the general state population. In the NREGA worker category, only 0.2% of the No Caste group are engaged, compared to 1.0% in the state average, and similarly, in agricultural labour, 3.5% of the No Caste group are involved versus 19.4% at the state level. Across all these indicators, the data reflects a relatively lower dependence on manual, agriculture-based, or public employment guarantee work within the No Caste population.

In formal professional employment, 7.7% of the No Caste group are employed in government jobs of a professional nature, which is substantially higher than the state average of 2.8%. Similarly, in private professional jobs, 13.3% of the No Caste population is engaged, compared to 7.4% at the state level. This indicates that the group has higher participation in both government and private sector professional occupations when compared to the general population of the state.

On income distribution, 59.8% of the No Caste group report annual incomes between ₹0 and ₹1 lakh, while at the state level, this category accounts for 78.2% of the population. This reflects a smaller proportion of low-income households within the No Caste group relative to the state overall. At the higher end of income levels, 11.5% of the No Caste group report annual incomes above ₹5 lakh, compared to 4.4% for the state average. Furthermore, 29.0% of the No Caste population are income tax payers, while the state average stands at 10.3%, indicating a higher proportion of tax-paying individuals within this group.

Housing and Living Conditions

In terms of household assets and living conditions, 4.3% of households in the No Caste group own a car, compared to 3.2% at the state level. This indicates a marginally higher level of private vehicle ownership relative to the state average. Regarding housing size, 47.6% of No Caste households reside in dwellings with two rooms or fewer, which is lower than the state average of 63.5%.

In contrast, 23.2% of No Caste households live in homes with three or more rooms, compared to 27.5% at the state level. While the share of larger housing is slightly lower than the state average, the combined figures indicate that the No Caste group has comparatively fewer households at the lower end of housing space.

These indicators suggest that the group has somewhat better household asset ownership in terms of vehicles and a lower proportion living in smaller housing spaces, though not significantly higher in larger housing segments when compared to the state overall.

Loan/Borrowings Dependency

In terms of household borrowing for agricultural purposes, 2.2% of households in the No Caste group report having crop loans, compared to 20.4% at the state level. This reflects a substantially lower incidence of agricultural credit utilization within the No Caste group relative to the broader state population. The data suggests that only a very small proportion of No Caste households are engaged in crop-based agricultural activity that requires formal or informal credit, whereas at the state level, a much larger share of households depend on such loans for agricultural operations.

In the category of household loans taken for marriage or medical purposes, 1.4% of households in the No Caste group have reported such loans, compared to the state average of 7.0%. This indicates that the proportion of No Caste households reporting such loans is significantly lower than that observed at the state level. The data reflects that a smaller segment of the No Caste population is engaged in borrowing for major personal expenditures related to marriage or healthcare.

Land Ownership

Regarding land ownership patterns, 75.1% of households in the No Caste group own land holdings below 5 acres, compared to 81.5% at the state level. This indicates that the proportion of small landholders is somewhat lower in the No Caste group relative to the overall state population. In the mid-size category of 5 to 20 acres, 17.7% of No Caste households own land within this range, compared to 14.8% at the state level, reflecting a marginally higher share of medium landholdings.

In the largest land holding segment — above 20 acres — 7.3% of No Caste households report such holdings, while the corresponding figure for the state is 2.8%. This shows that the share of households owning large land parcels is significantly higher within the No Caste group when compared to the state average. Taken together, the data indicates that while the majority of No Caste landowners

are small holders like the general population, the group shows relatively higher representation in both medium and large landholding categories.

Merit, Mobility, and "No Caste" Identity

An important feature of the "No Caste" profile is its substantial representation in secure and competitive public sector employment. Compared to groups across OC, BC, SC, and ST categories, "No Caste" individuals occupy elite positions at disproportionately high rates relative to their 3.4% population share. These roles are primarily accessed through competitive examinations, which structurally favour individuals with prior access to quality education, English proficiency, and professional social capital—advantages more common in urban, upper-middle-class contexts.

The group shows particularly high representation in top-tier government services such as IAS/IPS (22.9%), other Central Government positions (13.2%), and among judges (9.3%). These are not network-driven sectors but gatekept through highly competitive and credential-dependent processes. This pattern suggests that many "No Caste" individuals likely emerged from households that invested heavily in education, possibly drawing on historic OC(General Caste) privileges or having transitioned through BC/SC/ST categories with upward mobility over generations. The choice to adopt a caste-neutral identity in these contexts may reflect both a distancing from caste-based disadvantage and a strategic alignment with the meritocratic norms of elite state institutions. Public sector representation also reinforces this group's civic visibility and formal status, in contrast to under-representation in local-level public services or welfare-dependent occupations.

In addition, the structure of public sector careers may contribute to the adoption of caste-neutral identification after recruitment. Although formal promotion processes in elite government services are designed to be caste-neutral, informal networks, institutional cultures, and professional hierarchies continue to reflect underlying caste dynamics. The stated ideals of neutrality and meritocracy in central services, the judiciary, and related sectors often coexist with these unspoken realities. In such environments, some individuals may have to adopt a "No Caste" identity as a professional signal, seeking to align with institutional expectations of neutrality and to navigate or mitigate caste-based perceptions within their professional sphere.

Beyond public employment, "No Caste" individuals are notably represented in urban private-sector professions. In the software and BPO sectors, 9.9% of employees identify as "No Caste"—the second highest share after the Reddy community. These fields, known for competitive and merit-based recruitment,

demand proficiency in English, formal education, and technological skills. The group's overrepresentation in these sectors relative to their population share suggests substantial access to quality education and urban opportunities, and a preference for workspaces where caste affiliations are neither required nor visible.

Similarly, "No Caste" individuals account for 5.8% of the state's doctors and surgeons—again, significantly exceeding their overall population share (3.4%). These roles, which require extensive academic credentialing and are viewed as status symbols in Indian society, indicate a demographic that is institutionally mobile and professionally ambitious. Success in such high-status professions likely reinforces the group's distancing from caste identifiers, aligning with their broader pattern of urban, merit-based mobility.

The Caste Certificate Conundrum

The paradox of caste detachment is most visible in the data on caste certificates. Despite identifying as caste-neutral, 43.3% of "No Caste" individuals reported possessing caste certificates—only marginally lower than the state average of 47.8%. This reflects a complex reality: individuals may retain their original certificates to access educational or employment benefits, or because institutional processes continue to demand caste disclosure, irrespective of self-identification.

Despite a sizable segment of the "No Caste" group possessing caste certificates, many individuals navigate a contested space between structural categorization and the assertion of caste neutrality—a contradiction that underscores a broader social reality, wherein caste is not merely a personal affiliation but a status that is externally assigned, institutionally reinforced, and socially inescapable. In competitive domains like civil services, judiciary, software, and medicine, "No Caste" individuals have demonstrated significant representation, which may indicate a strategic shift away from caste-based recognition once educational and economic capital has been secured.

However, this reclassification carries systemic implications that extend beyond individual agency. The continued administrative grouping of the "No Caste" population under the OC(General Caste) category may artificially inflate OC (General Caste) figures, particularly relevant in the context of EWS reservations. It also brings to the fore a structural imbalance, where the ability to opt out of caste—whether through privilege, mobility, or disenchantment—is not uniformly available to all social groups.

Ultimately, the emergence of the "No Caste" classification challenges simplistic understandings of caste as either present or absent. It forces a rethinking of how the state conceptualizes disadvantage, allocates entitlements, and navigates

identity within a constitutionally plural society. Rather than a binary of caste inclusion versus exclusion, the "No Caste" category reflects an evolving spectrum of caste positioning—where caste may be repurposed, strategically obscured, or temporarily suspended to facilitate alternative forms of social belonging, while the underlying structures of caste privilege remain deeply entrenched.

Factors underlying continued possession of caste certificates include:

- Administrative Practice: Caste is often assigned early in life by schools, communities, or officials and encoded into records.
- Legacy and Strategic Use: Individuals may continue to use certificates issued earlier to access rights or opportunities.
- Institutional Defaulting: Authorities may insist on or presume caste entries even when not provided.
- Closeted Utilitarianism: Some may reject caste identity publicly while retaining caste certificates to access benefits.
- Symbolic Rejection by the Privileged: Especially among upper-caste individuals, the "No Caste" label may signal moral distancing, while they still carry caste privilege through surnames and networks.

Can there be "No Caste" ?

The SEEEPC Survey's phenomenon of the "No Caste" classification offers a rare opportunity to examine whether caste in India can be consciously abandoned—not only as an identity but also as a determinant of social access and state recognition.

Demographic Visibility ≠ Structural Freedom

While 1.2 million individuals (3.4% of Telangana's population) identified as "No Caste," this act of disavowal did not automatically remove them from the logic of caste. Although they were administratively placed under the OC(General Caste) category, over 43% still possessed caste certificates. This reflects a key tension: caste may be voluntarily relinquished at the level of personal identity, but its institutional presence persists through records, eligibility conditions, and social interactions.

Caste Detachment and Upward Mobility

The group's disproportionately high representation in IAS/IPS (22.9%) and software jobs (9.9%) reveals that some individuals may choose to opt out of caste after securing upward mobility. This pathway, however, is available largely

to those with prior educational, linguistic, or urban privilege—often inherited or facilitated by caste-based advantages or prior access to reservations, whether acknowledged or not.

Thus, caste neutrality is often not the absence of caste, but the ability to walk away from its consequences. That ability is not evenly distributed across society.

Geographic and Economic Shelter

The urban concentration of the "No Caste" population is particularly striking. Over 86% reside in what can be termed the Hyderabad Extended City—comprising GHMC, Rangareddy, Sangareddy, and Medchal-Malkajgiri districts. This spatial clustering reinforces the idea that physical detachment from caste-structured environments is enabled by urban migration and settlement. These urban districts offer greater anonymity, reduced caste-based occupational expectations, and higher access to English-medium education, salaried employment, and private housing.

But even in cities, as the survey shows, discrimination in places of worship (5.6%) and child marriage (10%) persist, suggesting that caste detachment at the personal or official level does not insulate one from the cultural residues of caste.

Caste is Imposed, Not Just Inherited

The contradiction of "No Caste" individuals holding caste certificates, facing exclusion from schemes, or being categorized under OC, reveals that caste operates not only as self-identification, but as an externally imposed classification. It is embedded in institutions, community memory, and state policy. It is assigned in schools, presumed in surnames, and requested in every form—from exams to jobs to housing.

Hence, the escape from caste is partial, privileged, and conditional.

From Caste Refusal to Institutional Reform

The SEEEPC findings show that while individuals can attempt to opt out of caste, the system around them may not reciprocate that choice. True escape would require not just personal rejection, but institutional design that stops asking, assuming, and acting upon caste—especially in the delivery of rights, benefits, and identity.

Until that happens, "No Caste" remains not a post-caste condition—but a contested zone of aspiration, strategy, and ambiguity.

TIME FOR A NEW PARADIGM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

“Jiski jitni saṅkhyā bhārī, uski utni hissedārī” (Share proportional to population) was a social justice slogan coined by Mr. Kanshi Ram, the tall and powerful leader of the Scheduled Castes. This principle has been the paradigm of India’s social justice governance framework for the past seven decades. This has served India well thus far despite the stark social inequalities that are still glaring in Indian society today.

With Telangana’s SEEEPC Survey and the idea of a backwardness score and rank for each caste with CBI, the time is ripe to move to a social justice paradigm of “Share proportional to backwardness”. If we are able to identify caste groups in order of backwardness with reasonable accuracy and without share of population being a consideration, then it must also be possible to develop a social justice governance framework that uplifts those castes that are truly left behind.

If the idea of welfare schemes and expenditure is to help the marginalized and bridge the gap between the most and least backward sections of society, then as shown in the GOVERNMENT SCHEMES: WHO BENEFITS AND WHO DOES NOT? chapter, using caste census surveys and CBI frameworks, it is also possible to know which population group benefits from these schemes and if it helps reduce the gap between the haves and the have-nots. In other words, rather than the government filling the ‘social justice well’ with ‘water (resources)’ for all marginalised groups, a data based new social justice framework can now help the government deliver ‘water (resources)’ through a ‘social justice tap’ directly into each needy household.

Backwardness is also a feeling and not just about possessions. Discrimination and lack of dignity cannot be solved only through welfare schemes and reservations. There must be commensurate power and representation for these groups. With CBI, we know the caste groups that are in the bottom quartile of backwardness. It is then efficient to create space and representation for these castes in positions of power and responsibility in politics and government. At its core, social justice is about neutralising the curse of a bad birth lottery. It is best done through a new Social Justice 2.0 paradigm of targeted social policy.

APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGY OF THE TELANGANA SEEEPC SURVEY-2024

Introduction and Rationale

The Telangana Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste (SEEEPC) Survey 2024 was initiated to address critical data gaps left by previous exercises. While the decennial Census provided foundational demographic statistics and the 2011 SECC offered limited socio-economic details, neither instrument delivered the detailed, caste-disaggregated insights required for more responsive policymaking since the 1931 Census undertaken during the British rule. In response, the Government of Telangana mandated a broad-based survey, following a resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly, to better inform welfare schemes, reservation policies, and social development programs.

"This house unanimously resolves to undertake a comprehensive door-to-door household survey (socio, economic, educational, employment, political and caste survey) across Telangana, covering social, economic, educational, employment, political, and caste aspects, as per the recommendation made by the Telangana Cabinet on 04.02.2024. This initiative aims to formulate and implement plans for the social, economic, educational, and employment advancement of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections of society."

The SEEEPC Survey was developed with input from a range of community stakeholders—civil society groups, caste associations, academic experts, and local elected representatives—so that the data collection could more accurately reflect ground realities and engage historically marginalized populations.

Conceptual Framework and Objectives

At the heart of SEEEPC lies a multidimensional framework structured around six domains: personal and household characteristics; marriage and fertility; education; occupation and employment; economic assets and reservation benefits; and political participation alongside social mobility on a deeper level. The primary objectives were to generate disaggregated data by caste, social category, gender, and region; to measure access to and utilization of reservation schemes and welfare services; to understand patterns of discrimination and social inclusion;

and to track political engagement at the grassroots. By capturing both static statuses (for example, highest educational qualification and asset holdings) and dynamic processes (such as occupational shifts, migration for work, and scheme uptake), the survey aimed to furnish policymakers with actionable data across time-sensitive and structural dimensions.

Sampling Strategy and Survey Frame

The survey utilized the 2021 Census enumeration blocks (EBs) as its sampling frame, covering all 94,261 blocks across Telangana's 33 districts. Blocks were stratified by urban, rural, and tribal classifications, including 39,758 urban and 54,503 rural EBs, with additional focus on tribal habitations. In line with the PPT guidelines, each EB was defined to include 150 households, which served as the primary survey unit. For detailed data collection, field teams selected 40 households per EB through systematic random sampling, representing approximately 27% of households. This two-stage cluster design yielded a target sample of over 3.7 million individuals.

To ensure a robust field execution, one enumerator was assigned to each EB, and supervisors were deployed at a ratio of one supervisor per ten EBs. Field teams conducted pre-survey block validation exercises—updating obsolete block boundaries, re-mapping areas of urban expansion, and delineating new high-rise apartment complexes—to maintain an up-to-date and representative sampling frame. These preparatory steps, staffing allocations, ensured that the sample frame remained current, representative, and capable of capturing Telangana's dynamic demographic landscape.

Human Resource Planning and Deployment

To guarantee local language proficiency and administrative familiarity, 3,200 in-service personnel were deputed as frontline enumerators. District Collectors selected staff from fourteen approved job categories that routinely handle community outreach or data work:

- Teachers (Government and Local-body)
- Agricultural Extension Officers
- Anganwadi Teachers
- IKP Area Programme Managers (APMs) and BookKeepers
- Bill Collectors / Assistant Bill Collectors and Ward Officers (Urban)
- Panchayat Secretaries and Junior Assistants (Rural)
- Chainmen and Work Inspectors (Engineering Departments)
- Environmental Engineers and RWS&S Assistant Engineers
- Record Assistants and Typists

Each deputed enumerator possessed at least higher-secondary education and was relieved from parent duties for the survey period.

Cascading in-person training converted these employees into survey specialists:

1. Trainers of Trainers (175) from all districts and GHMC attended a five-day residential programme at MCRHRD, Hyderabad on 28 October 2024.
2. These trainers subsequently held district- and mandal-level sessions, ultimately training 1,03,889 enumerators and supervisors in survey objectives, paper-form completion, and the Enumerator Guidelines handbook.

Enumerators were issued printed survey schedules, house-listing forms, and the Enumerator Guidelines handbook before field deployment.

Supervision and Monitoring Framework

A ratio of one supervisor per ten enumeration blocks provided continuous field oversight. Supervisors were selected from mid-tier technical and administrative cadres whose routine duties involve inspection and record-keeping—Revenue Inspectors, Tahsildars and Deputy Tahsildars, Mandal Parishad Statistical Officers (MPSOs), Municipal Managers, Agricultural Officers and Mandal Agriculture Officers, Assistant Engineers (Panchayat Raj, RWS&S, Urban Local Bodies), Environmental Engineers, ICDS Supervisors, IKP Area Programme Managers, Superintendent/Executive/Deputy Executive Engineers, and Town-Planning Officers.

All supervisors attended the same cascading training cycle as enumerators, with additional modules on daily schedule verification, manual error-flag reporting, and dispute resolution. Completed paper schedules were reviewed each evening, and discrepancies were rectified before forwarding bundles for data entry. At the district level, Additional Collectors (Local Bodies) acted as nodal officers, chairing weekly progress meetings, reallocating resources when necessary, and issuing clarifications to maintain uniform procedures across Telangana.

Questionnaire Development Process

The instrument's 57 main questions and 75 sub-fields were developed by the Telangana Government through a methodical, multi-stage process. Initially, technical teams within the state government conducted a comparative review of national survey instruments (Census, NSS, NFHS, and SECC) to identify thematic gaps and establish consistency with statistical best practices. Building on this foundation, targeted consultations were convened by the government with statisticians, academic experts, civil society organizations, and community representatives to ensure the relevance and clarity of each item.

To further refine the tool, the state government conducted pilot studies in four demographically distinct districts—Jogulamba Gadwal (rural), Khammam (semi-urban), Ranga Reddy (urban), and Kumuram Bheem Asifabad (tribal)—covering 200 households. These pilots helped identify ambiguities in question wording, issues of cultural sensitivity, and response fatigue. Revisions following the pilot included the addition of caste-neutral response categories (e.g., "No Caste"), standardization of asset classifications, and simplification of digital entry formats to reduce error margins during data capture.

The finalized questionnaire, prepared and validated by the Telangana State Government based on technical and field feedback, was supported by a comprehensive interviewer manual and protocols for data quality assurance. It was formally approved by the State Cabinet on 26 October 2024, marking the culmination of a structured and consultative instrument design process.

Modules and Indicators

The Personal and Household Information module comprised eleven items that recorded household composition, respondent's gender and age, relationship to the head, marital status, religion, mother tongue, and self-identified caste or "No Caste" status, along with Aadhaar and mobile contact details. In the Marriage and Fertility section, four questions elicited data on current marital status, age at first marriage, incidence of inter-caste marriages within the household, and detailed fertility particulars, including children ever born, surviving, and born in the past year. The Education module tracked literacy, highest qualification attained, medium of instruction, type of institution attended (public, private, or aided), and observed intergenerational changes in educational attainment. Its eight-item Occupation and Employment module explored primary occupation, sector affiliation (organized versus unorganized), differentiation between self-employment and wage work, annual earnings or turnover, persistence of traditional caste-linked occupations, occupational mobility over the preceding decade, average commuting distance and mode of transport, and episodes of migration for work. The Economic Assets and Reservation Benefits module documented land ownership (Patta, assigned, and usage rights), house ownership status, inventories of vehicles and livestock, durable goods, income brackets, tax registration, bank account access, loan sources and amounts, possession of caste certificates, and reservation schemes availed in the last five years. Finally, Political Participation and Social Mobility indicators captured experiences of elected office-holding from village panchayats to state assemblies, tenure durations, membership in local governance bodies, encounters with caste-based discrimination in accessing worship places and public services, and aspirations for upward mobility.

Determination of Caste List

A critical preparatory step in the SEEEPC Survey involved the creation of an inclusive and representative caste list to be used during data collection. This list was built through a multi-stage consultative process. The starting point was the official list of castes used by the Telangana Backward Classes Commission, which was then expanded based on inputs from civil society organizations, caste associations, academic researchers, and district-level officials.

District-level consultations were held to capture the linguistic, regional, and sub-caste variations in nomenclature. Enumerators were trained to recognize alternate caste spellings and regional variations, and an "Other Caste" option was included with manual text entry in cases where the listed categories did not capture self-identified caste names. Importantly, the survey also included options such as "No Caste," "No Religion," and "No Social Category," in line with legal and civil society advocacy, allowing respondents to assert non-affiliation. This ensured both recognition of community-verified caste identities and space for caste-neutral self-expression within the formal framework of the enumeration process.

Comparative Analysis with the 2011 Decennial Census

In terms of scope and depth, the 2011 Decennial Census focused on foundational demographics—household size and composition, age, gender, marital status, literacy and school attendance, primary occupation categories, religion, and broad social categories (SC/ST/BC/OC(General Caste)). By contrast, SEEEPC extends far beyond these parameters by encompassing six thematic domains—social, economic, educational, employment, political, and mobility—and introducing over 30 new indicators not covered by the Census. Where the Census posed roughly six questions on household and personal characteristics, two on marriage and fertility, and a handful on education and occupation, SEEEPC multiplies each into detailed sub-questions and adds modules on migration, reservation benefit utilization, asset ownership, and political engagement. For example, the single Census question on work status evolved into an eight-item occupational module, capturing sector of employment, nature of work, annual earnings, traditional caste-linked roles, occupational shifts, commuting patterns, and migration instances. Educational data capture expanded from literacy to include qualifications, medium of instruction, institution type, dropout points, and generational attainment changes, while economic indicators grew from absent in the Census to detailed accounts of land titles, dwelling quality, asset inventories, financial inclusion measures, and income brackets. The inclusion of social and political dimensions—reservation certificate possession, scheme utilization, elected office tenure, and caste-based

discrimination experiences—marks a novel and critical advancement absent in the traditional census framework. By incorporating decentralized field checks and expanding thematic coverage, SEEEPC presents a broader dataset than the paper-based Decennial Census, though each serves distinct administrative and policy functions.

Field Execution and Monitoring

The fieldwork was divided into two core stages:

1. House Listing Phase (6–8 November 2024): Enumerators visited each dwelling unit, affixed a house sticker, and recorded basic locational and household identity details.
2. Main Survey Phase (9 November – 25 December 2024): A detailed household-level survey was conducted. The process began with high-profile enumerations, which were part of efforts to raise public awareness and encourage participation.

Progress was monitored through real-time dashboards, which tracked EB-level completion, flagged discrepancies, and provided summary statistics. Senior government officials conducted regular reviews via video conferencing to monitor field implementation and address challenges. Supervisors validated sample records and reported technical or procedural issues.

- Total Households Listed: 1,15,71,457
- Total Households Surveyed: 1,12,15,134
- Coverage Achieved: 96.9%

Technology and Data Management

- The Centre for Good Governance (CGG) developed the digital backbone of the SEEEPC Survey. The core features of the software system included:
- OTP-Based Login: Ensuring secure and authenticated access for enumerators and supervisors.
- Enumerator-DEO Interface: Allowing for real-time clarification during data entry.
- Real-Time Dashboards: Monitoring progress, detecting anomalies, and guiding course corrections.
- Auto-Scaling Servers: Handling data upload and storage efficiently under varying loads.
- Enumerator-DEO Pairing: Reducing data entry errors by enabling enumerators to support DEOs during form digitization.
- Data Validation: Conducting logical checks and field validations to minimize entry-level errors.

Data Entry

Following survey completion, the data entry process was initiated with the training of key personnel:

- 276 Master Trainers were trained on 16 November 2024.
- 75,604 Data Entry Operators (DEOs) were subsequently trained across districts and mandals.
- Data Entry Period: Conducted from 20 November to 25 December 2024.

Enumerators were seated beside DEOs during data digitization, enabling direct clarification of ambiguous or illegible responses and improving the accuracy of entries.

Phase II Outreach and Coverage Improvement

To ensure maximum inclusion, the Planning Department initiated a follow-up survey from 16 to 28 February 2025 for households that could not be covered in the first phase due to locked homes or inaccessibility.

Strategies included:

- Toll-Free Helpline: 040-21111111 for rescheduling visits.
- Praja Palana Seva Kendras: Over 500 help centers were opened for walk-in surveys.
- Online Submission Portal: Enabled households with internet access to self-submit data.
- Community Engagement: Field mobilization by NGOs and local volunteers.
- Additional Households Covered: 21,715

Ethical Protocols and Participant Safeguards

Informed consent was obtained from every respondent, with clear explanations of survey objectives, data utilization, and privacy safeguards. Enumerators adhered to anonymization protocols separating personal identifiers from survey responses, and special training ensured sensitive caste and discrimination questions were handled discreetly, minimizing respondent discomfort. A grievance redressal mechanism was established to address any concerns about data misuse or participant welfare.

Public Events, Developments, and Response

The SEEEPC Survey was not only a technical exercise but also a significant public event that drew attention across political, civil society, and media spheres. The announcement of the survey by the Telangana Legislative Assembly drew responses from a variety of stakeholders, including civil society groups who had advocated for caste-disaggregated data. The enumeration of the Hon'ble Governor

on the first day of the main survey phase set the tone for official endorsement.

Throughout the data collection period, various state and district-level public awareness campaigns were launched to promote participation. These included mass media outreach, gram sabhas, social media campaigns, and involvement of local elected representatives. NGOs and community-based organizations also played a crucial role in ensuring inclusion and disseminating accurate information.

The survey's inclusion of caste-neutral options such as "No Caste," "No Religion," and "No Social Category" reflected evolving social identities and elicited varied responses, particularly in urban areas. However, misinformation and apprehensions also circulated in certain regions, including rumors about data misuse. The Planning Department responded by issuing clarifications, setting up helplines, and organizing public meetings to reassure the public.

Opposition parties and political observers engaged with the survey both critically and constructively, questioning timelines and resource allocation while acknowledging its potential impact on welfare targeting and social justice. Academic institutions and research bodies expressed keen interest in the data, recognizing its potential to influence public policy and governance.

Overall, the SEEEPC Survey generated a wide range of public reactions, underscoring both the complexity and the importance of measuring socio-economic and caste realities in contemporary India.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Surveys

Despite its extensive scope and methodological rigor, SEEEPC faces potential underreporting in sensitive domains such as income and experiences of discrimination. Future improvements could include establishing longitudinal cohorts to track socio-economic changes over time, integrating survey data with administrative databases for dynamic updates, and incorporating health and nutrition modules. Employing artificial intelligence for predicting non-response and enabling adaptive survey routing may further enhance coverage and data quality.

Conclusion

Through expanded modules, detailed indicators, and digital protocols, the SEEEPC Survey offers a comprehensive dataset on socio-economic and caste-linked variables at the state level. Its rich, multidimensional insights will underpin targeted, equitable policy interventions that advance inclusion, social justice, and responsive governance.

APPENDIX 2: CBI PARAMETERS: SOCIAL GROUP

CBI Parameters: By Social Groups

Positive Parameter ; Negative Parameter

		Backward Class	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	General Caste
	Social Discrimination				
1	Discriminated to visit place of worshi	5.0%	5.3%	4.0%	5.4%
2	Families with inter-caste marriage	4.7%	4.9%	3.2%	5.8%
	Gender				
3	Female to Male ratio	98.4%	101.0%	96.3%	97.6%
4	Girl Child marriage	4.6%	4.0%	3.9%	4.4%
5	Share of women studied below 10th	67.1%	66.5%	72.3%	55.0%
	Education				
6	Illiterate Children	3.6%	3.3%	3.7%	3.7%
7	School Dropout rate of Children	2.3%	2.1%	2.4%	2.1%
8	Population studied only upto primary	38.7%	38.6%	40.5%	34.6%
9	Intermediate Education	54.0%	57.0%	53.0%	44.0%
10	Population with diploma or above	20.3%	18.9%	15.9%	31.7%
11	Children attending state govt school	45.4%	49.1%	43.6%	32.4%
12	Children attending private school	17.3%	9.7%	7.8%	29.9%
13	Youth studied in English medium	48.1%	40.7%	36.6%	66.3%
	Occupation				
14	Daily Wage Labourers	32.2%	45.7%	40.6%	10.9%
15	Child Labour	0.8%	1.2%	1.8%	0.2%
16	Daily Wage vendors	5.7%	3.5%	2.8%	3.9%
17	MGNREGA Workers	1.0%	1.7%	1.2%	0.3%
18	Agricultural Labourer	18.3%	31.7%	32.2%	5.5%
19	Continuing Traditional Occupation	10.4%	3.0%	1.1%	2.0%
20	With professional government jobs	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%	3.5%
21	With professional private sector jobs	6.3%	5.6%	2.8%	14.8%
22	Own medium or large business	0.02%	0.01%	0.00%	0.06%
	Income				
23	Annual Income>0; <1 lac	80.5%	86.2%	88.2%	56.2%
24	Annual Income>1 lac; <5 lac	16.7%	11.7%	9.7%	30.6%
25	Annual Income>5 lac	2.9%	2.1%	2.1%	13.2%
26	Income Tax payer	7.9%	6.0%	5.0%	23.5%
	Land Ownership				
27	Own land	36.3%	35.2%	58.1%	33.7%
28	% of land irrigated	45.9%	43.4%	32.9%	44.1%
29	Avg irrigated land owned per family (	0.30	0.20	0.25	0.42
30	Families owning <5 acre land	85.0%	90.5%	80.1%	69.1%
31	Families owning 5-20 acre land	12.2%	7.0%	17.9%	26.4%
32	Families owning >20 acre land	2.9%	1.0%	2.0%	4.4%
	Living Conditions				
33	Share of Rural Population	58.2%	70.6%	88.4%	39.7%
34	Households with refrigerator	23.6%	15.7%	17.7%	35.9%
35	Households with car for personal use	2.4%	1.5%	1.6%	9.2%
36	Households with less than 2 rooms	63.9%	73.7%	75.6%	47.4%
37	Households with more than 3 rooms	28.5%	18.9%	17.6%	42.8%
38	Households with no toilet	10.8%	18.8%	32.5%	4.5%
39	Households with no electricity	4.7%	8.3%	11.0%	2.7%
40	Households with no tap water	20.0%	19.7%	29.2%	12.8%
	Financial Condition				
41	Loans for marriage or medical expens	7.3%	10.9%	6.9%	3.0%
42	Loan borrowed from money lender	8.7%	8.8%	9.7%	5.1%

Figure 37: Discriminated to visit place of worship

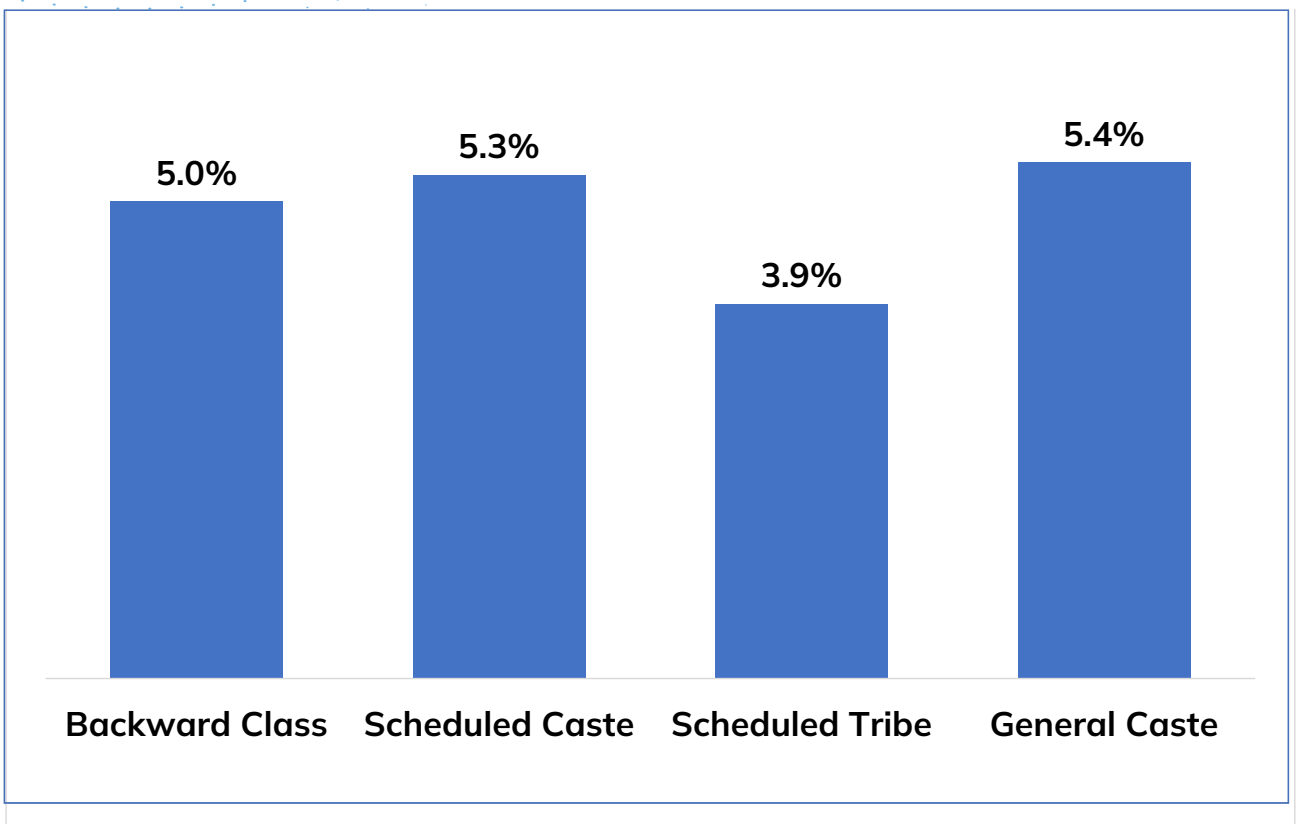


Figure 38: Families with inter-caste marriage

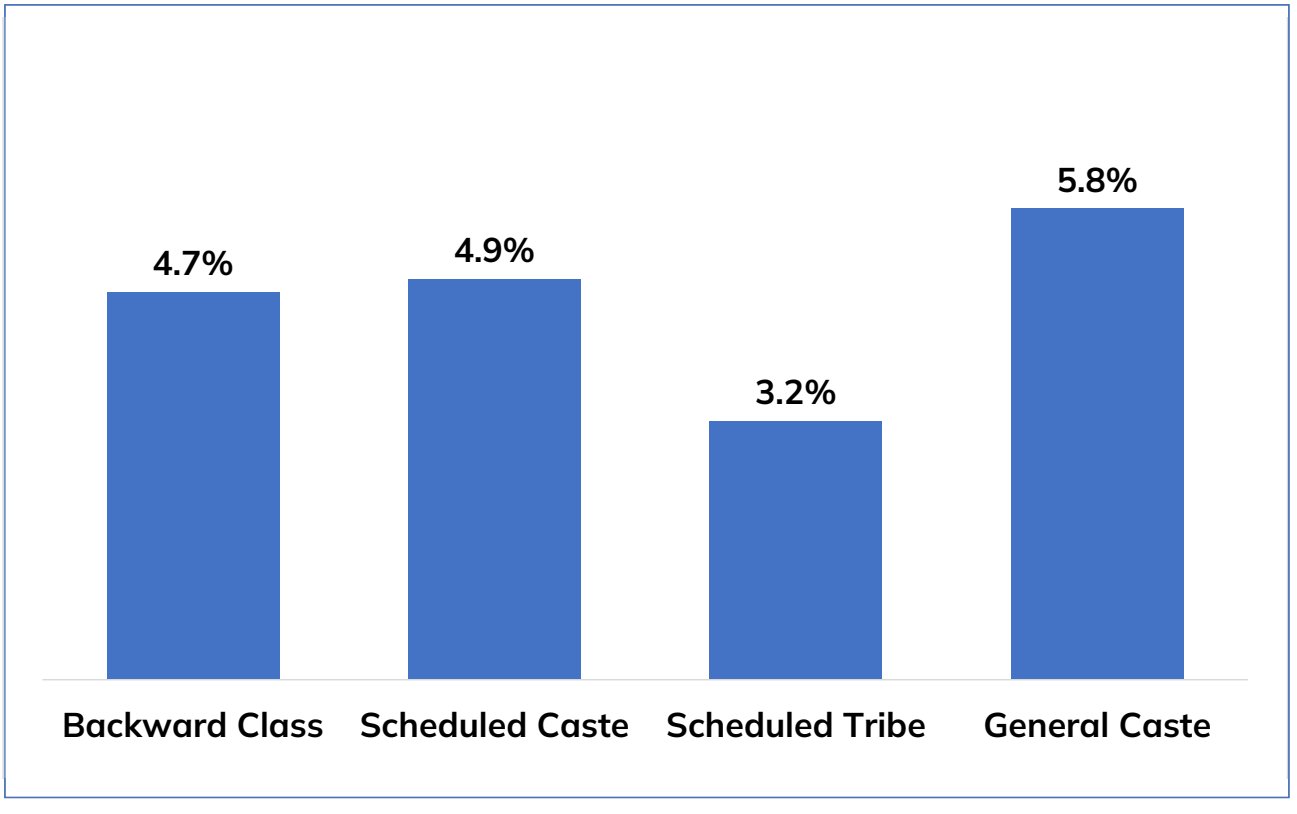


Figure 39: Female to Male ratio

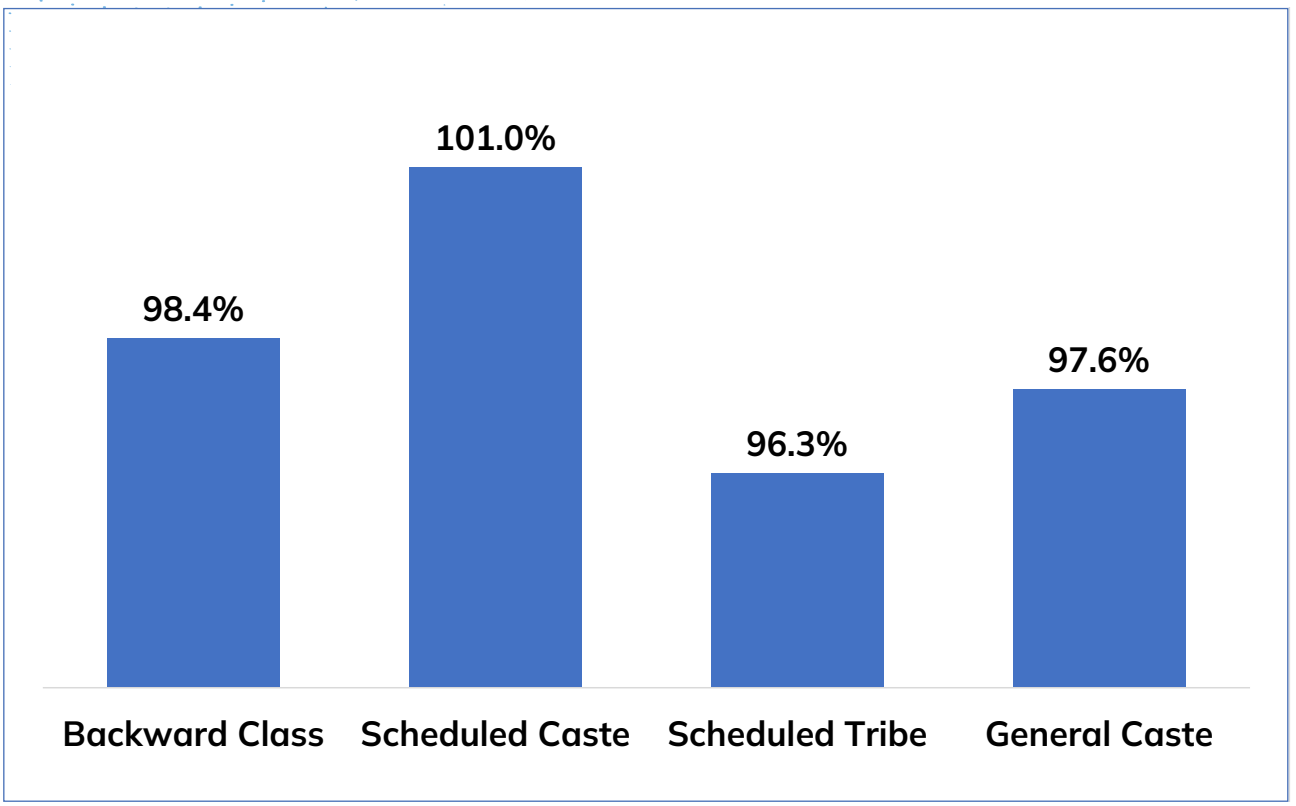


Figure 40: Girl Child marriage

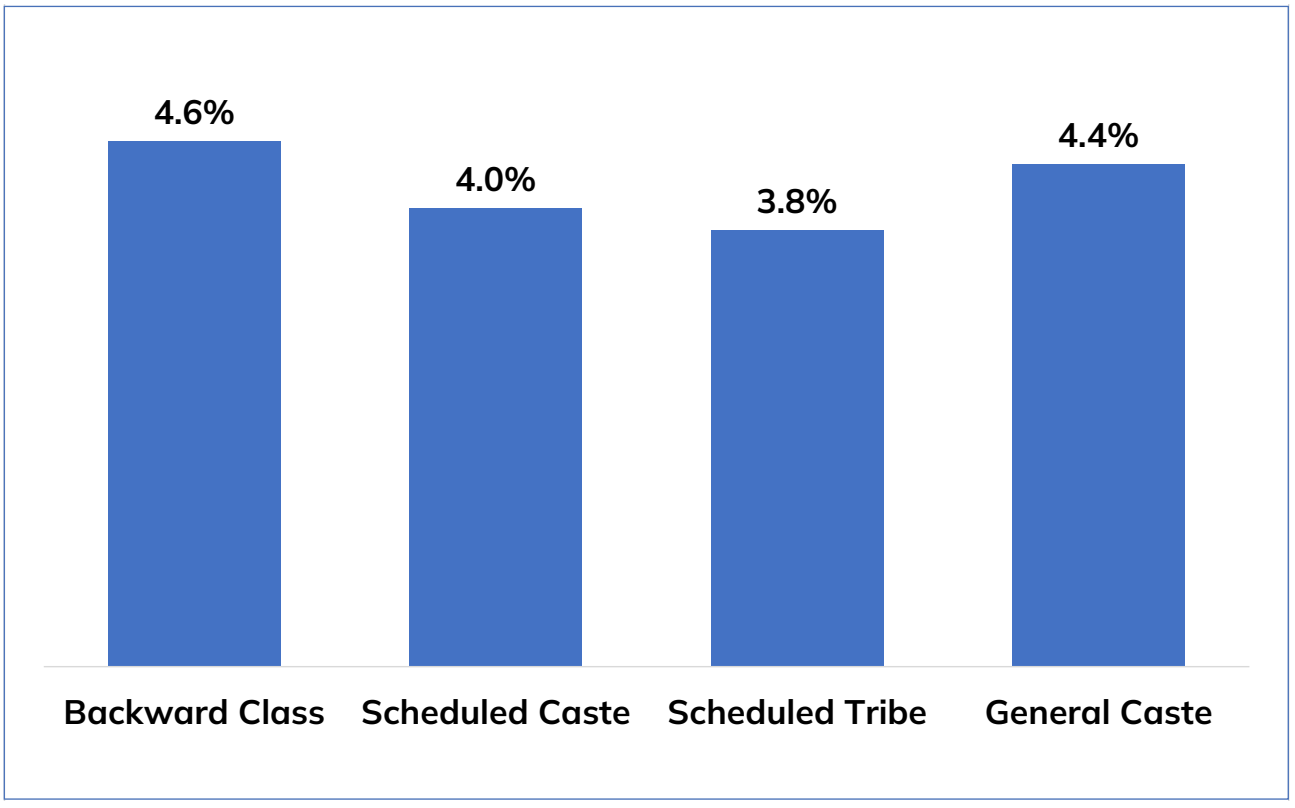


Figure 41: Illiterate Children

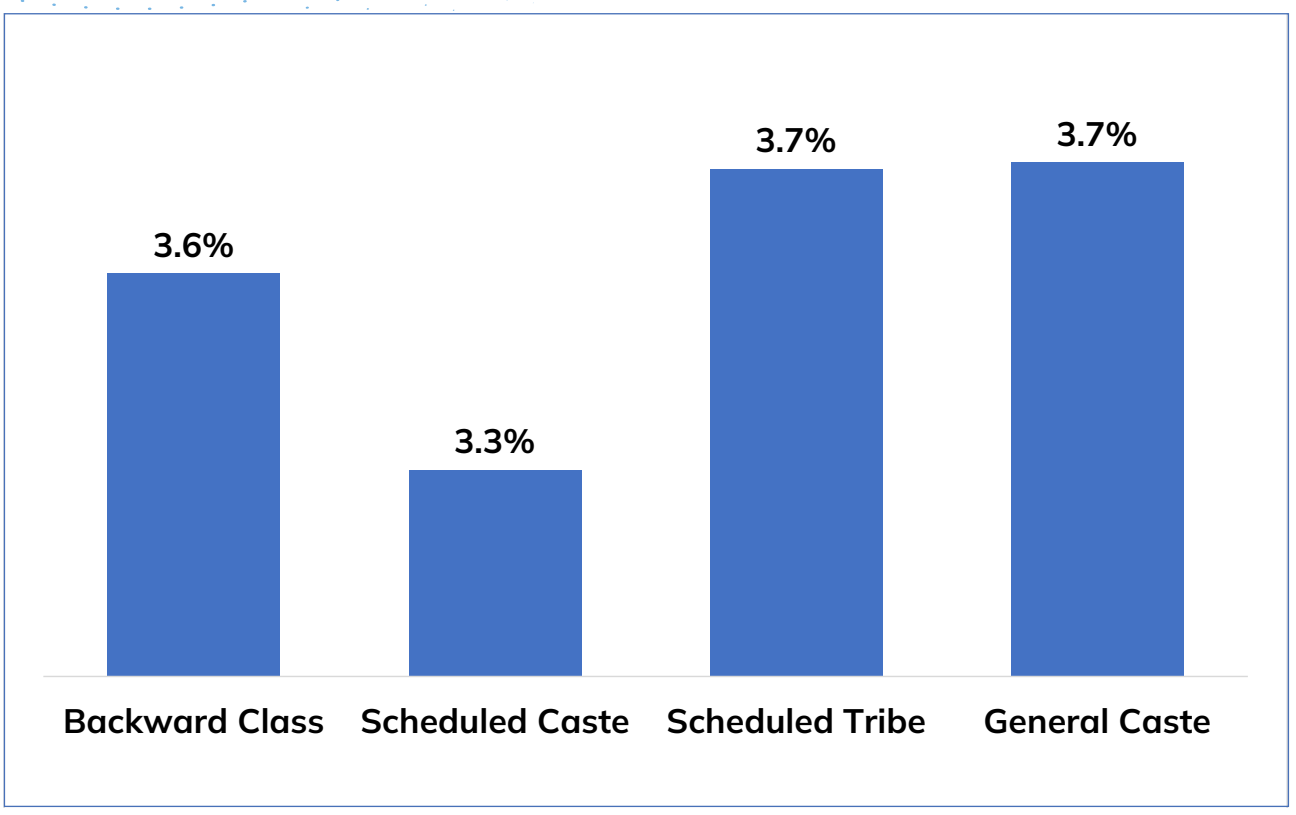


Figure 42: School Dropout rate of Children

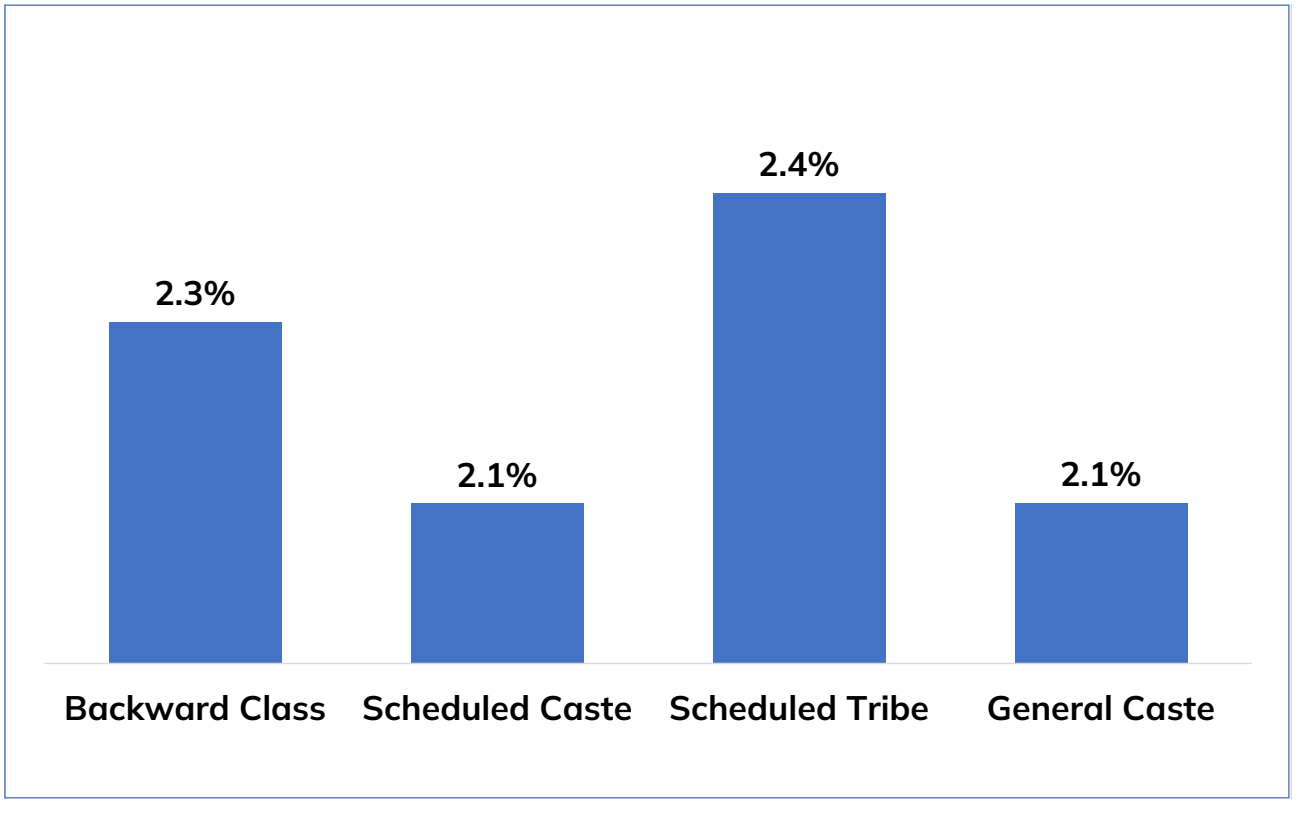


Figure 43: Population studied only upto primary

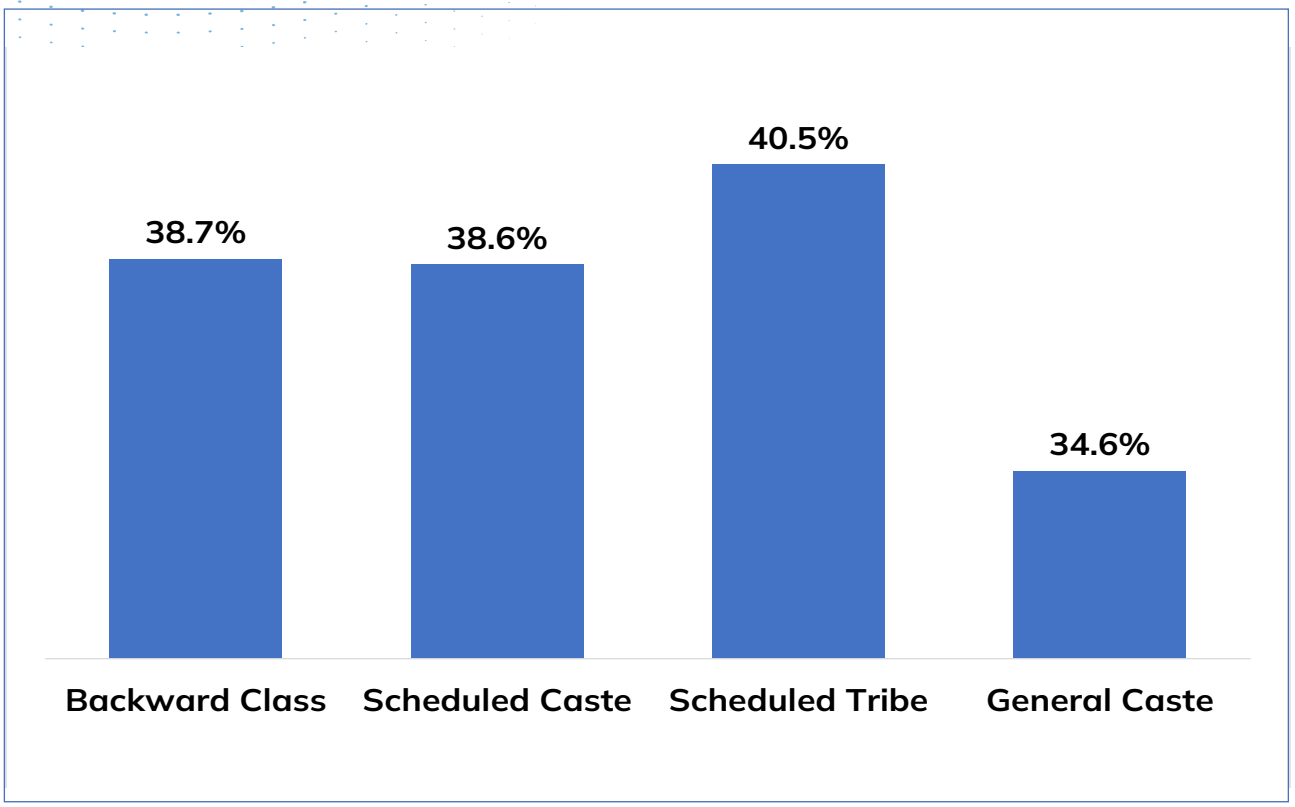


Figure 44: Population with diploma or above

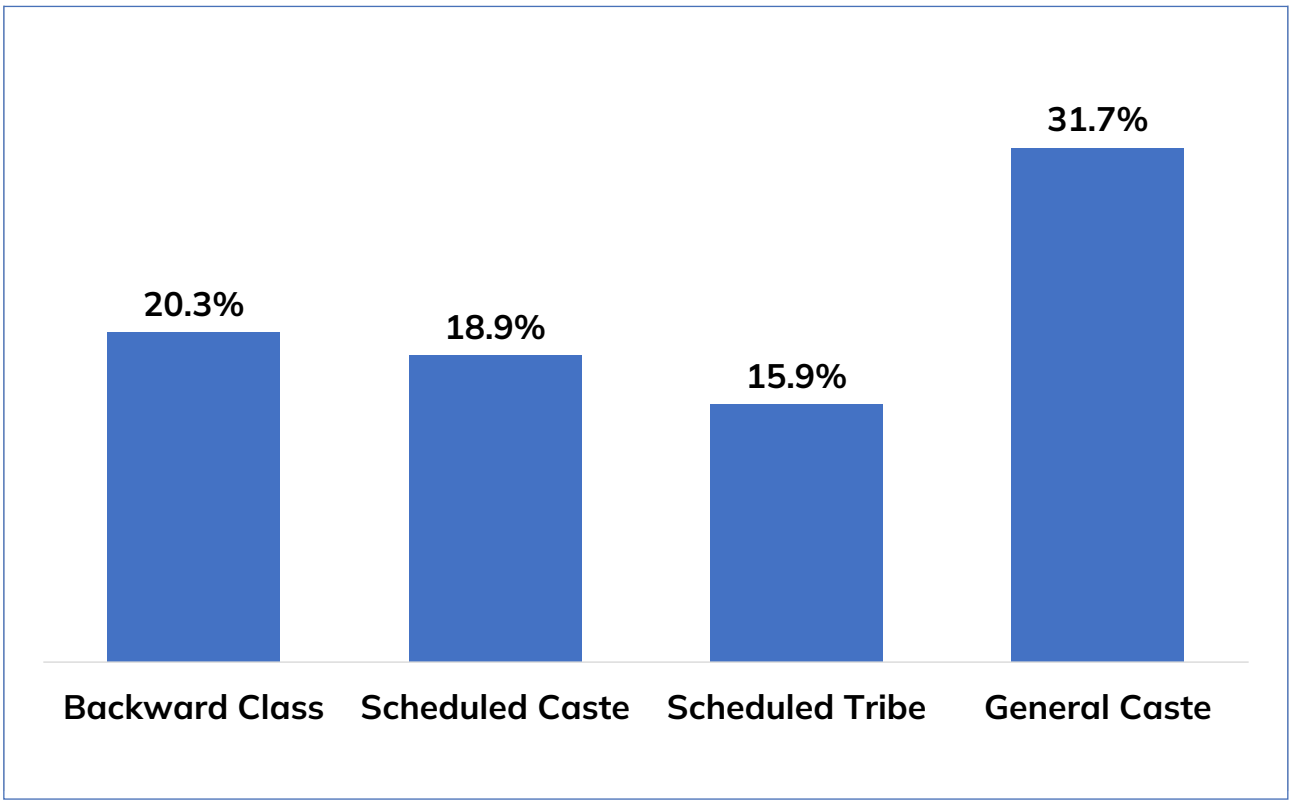


Figure 45: Studied in State Government School

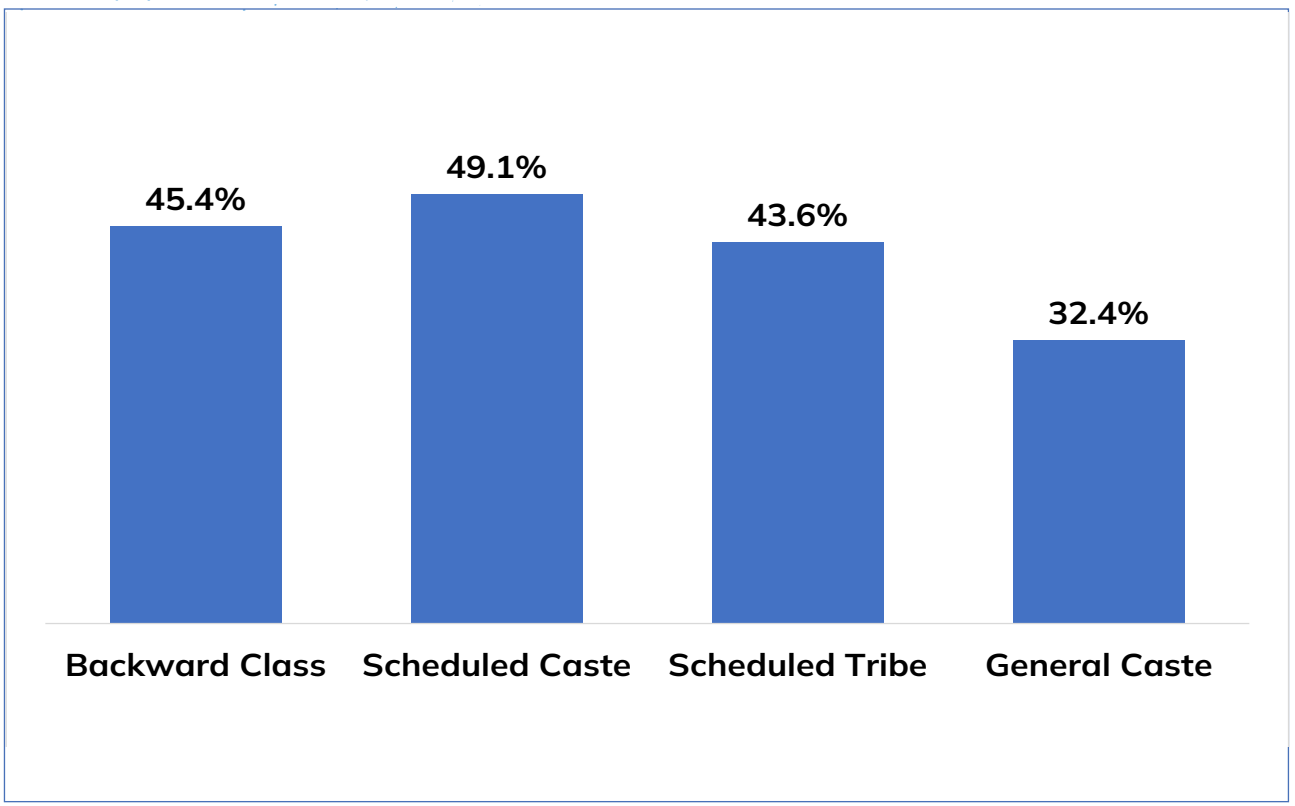


Figure 46: Studied in Private School

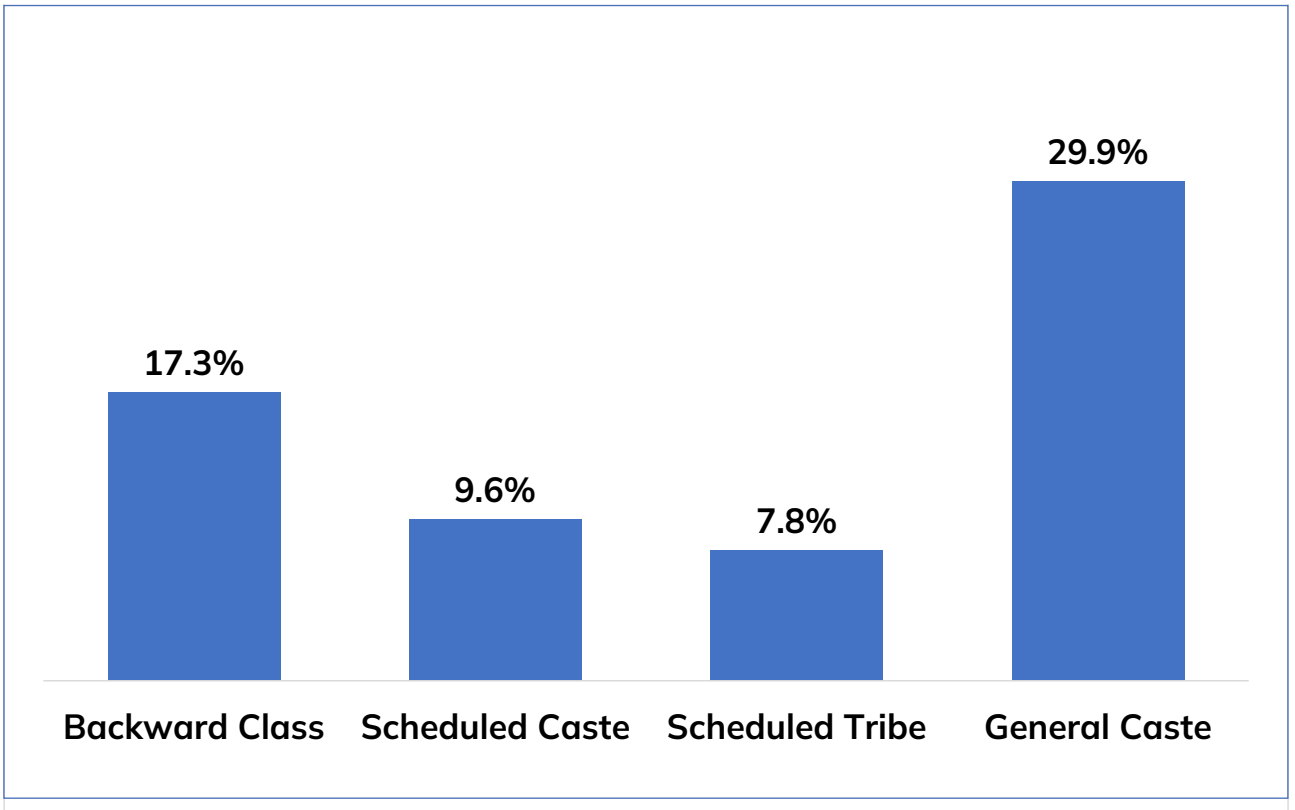


Figure 47: Youth studied in English medium

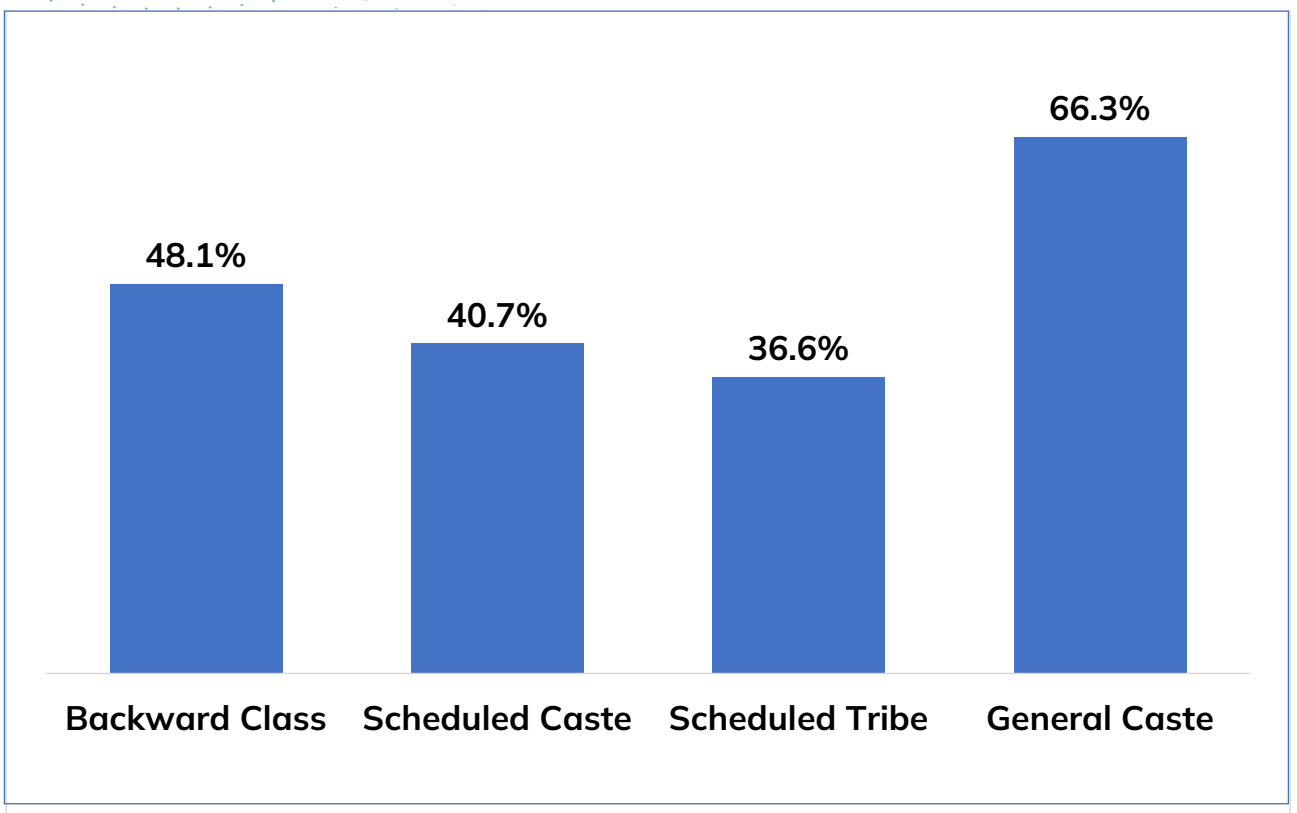


Figure 48: Daily Wage Labourers

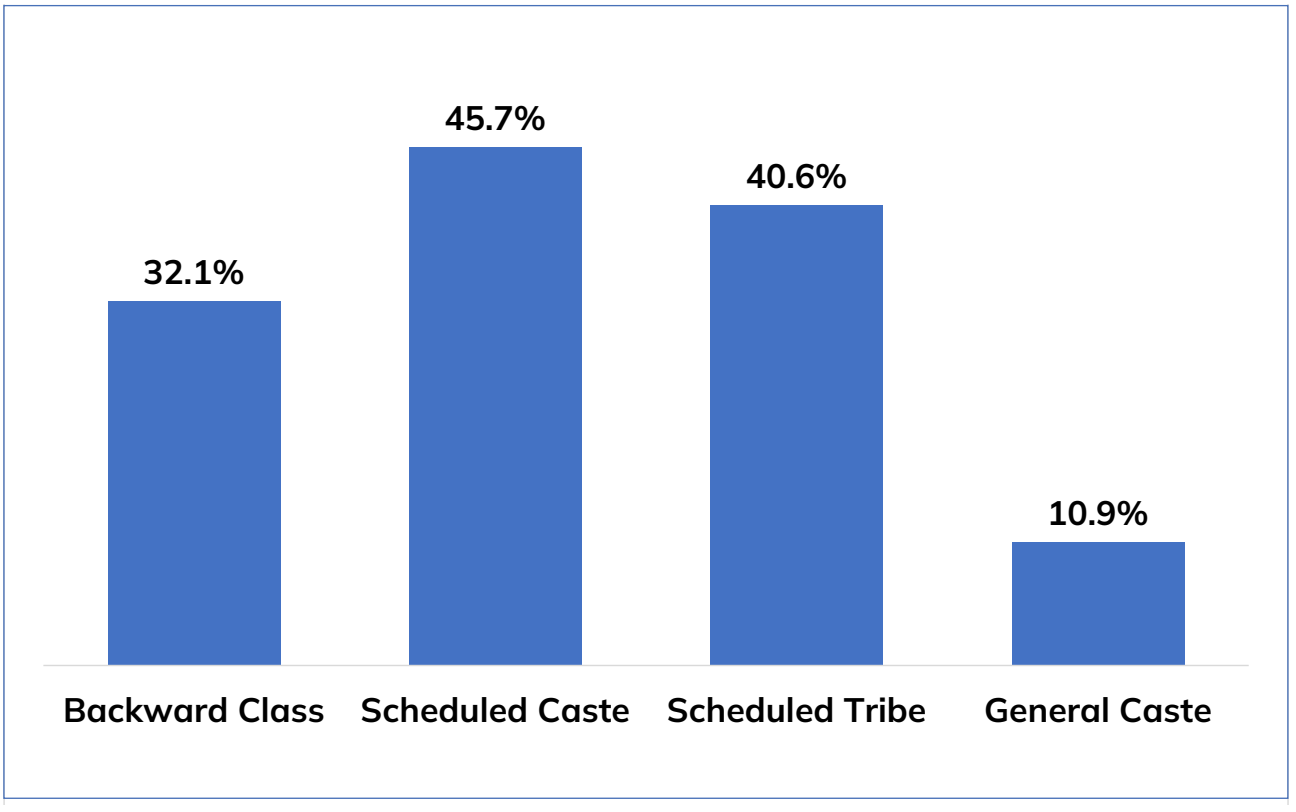


Figure 49: Child Labour

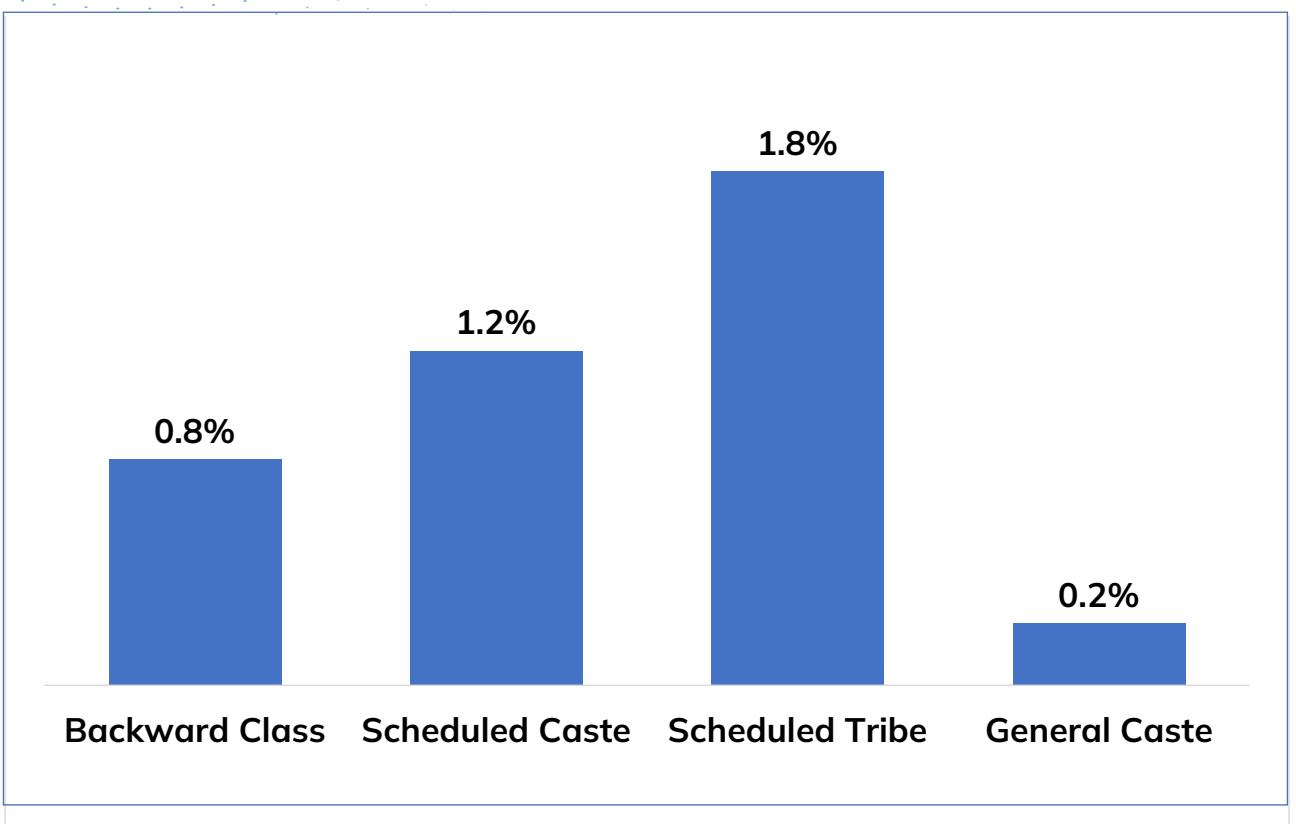


Figure 50: Daily Wage vendors

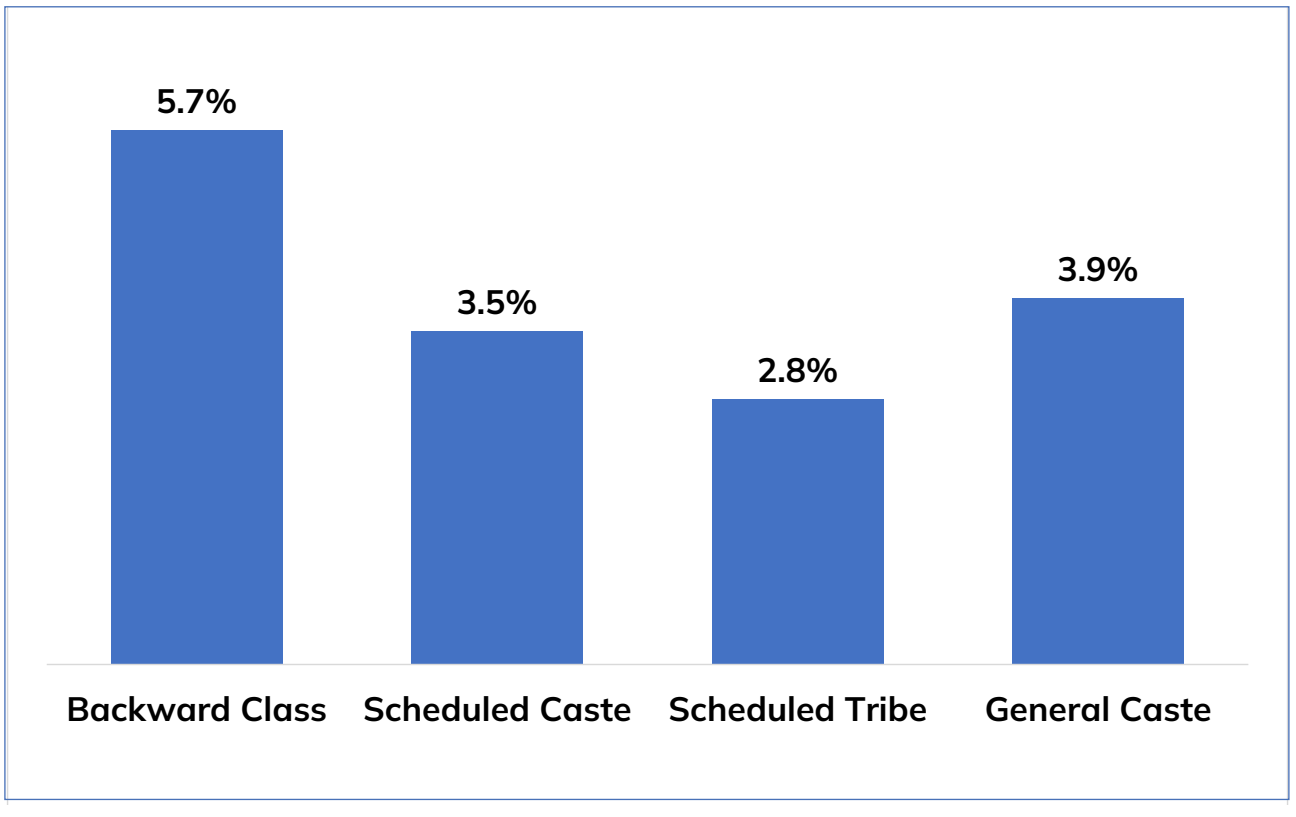


Figure 51: MGNREGA Workers

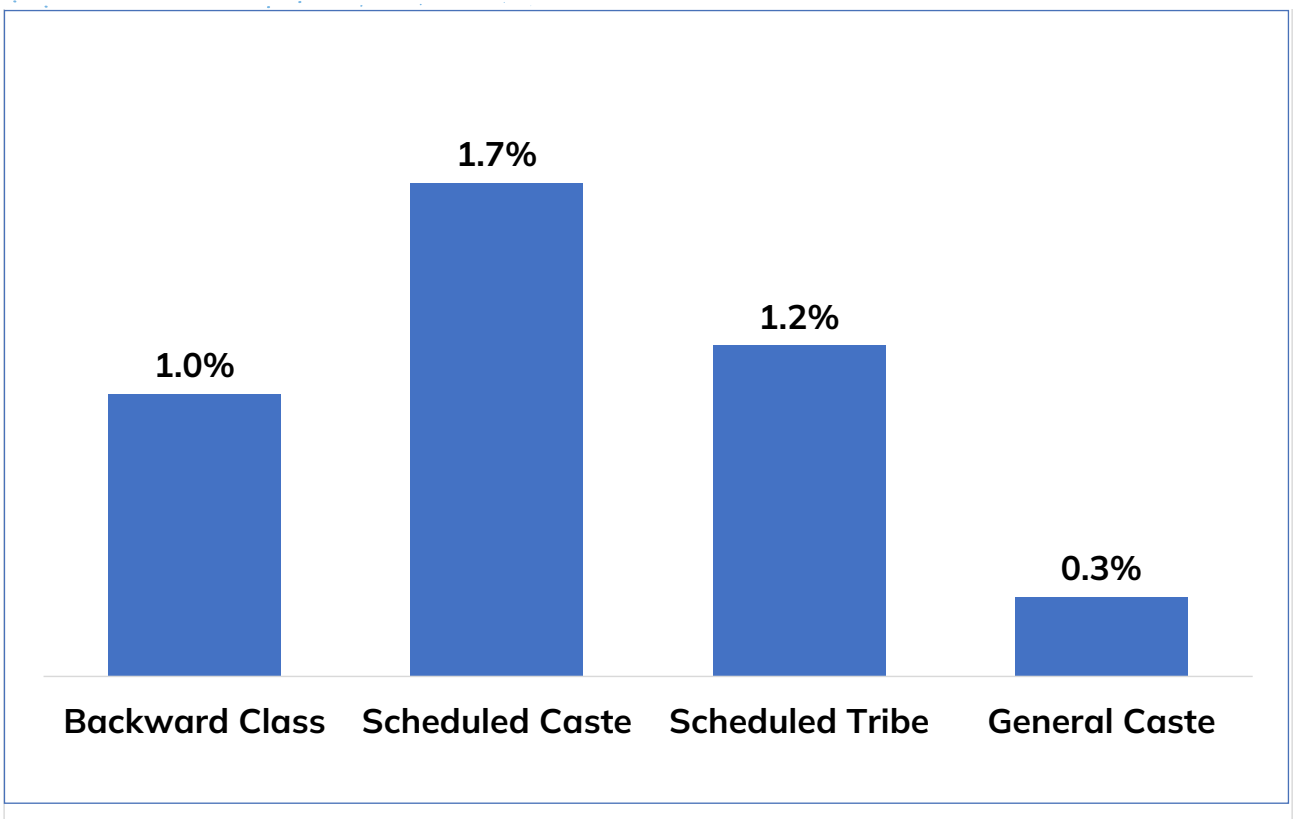


Figure 52: Agricultural Labourer

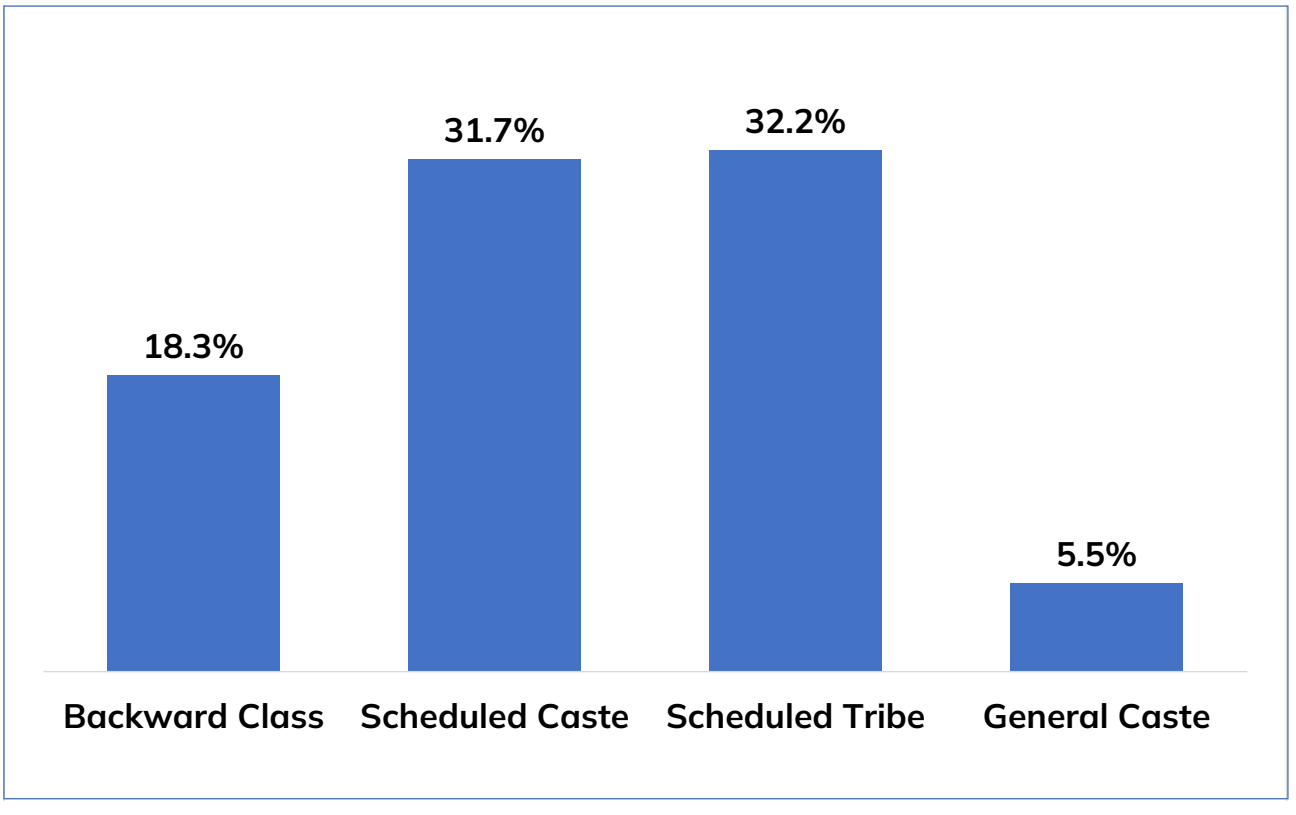


Figure 53: Continuing Traditional Occupation

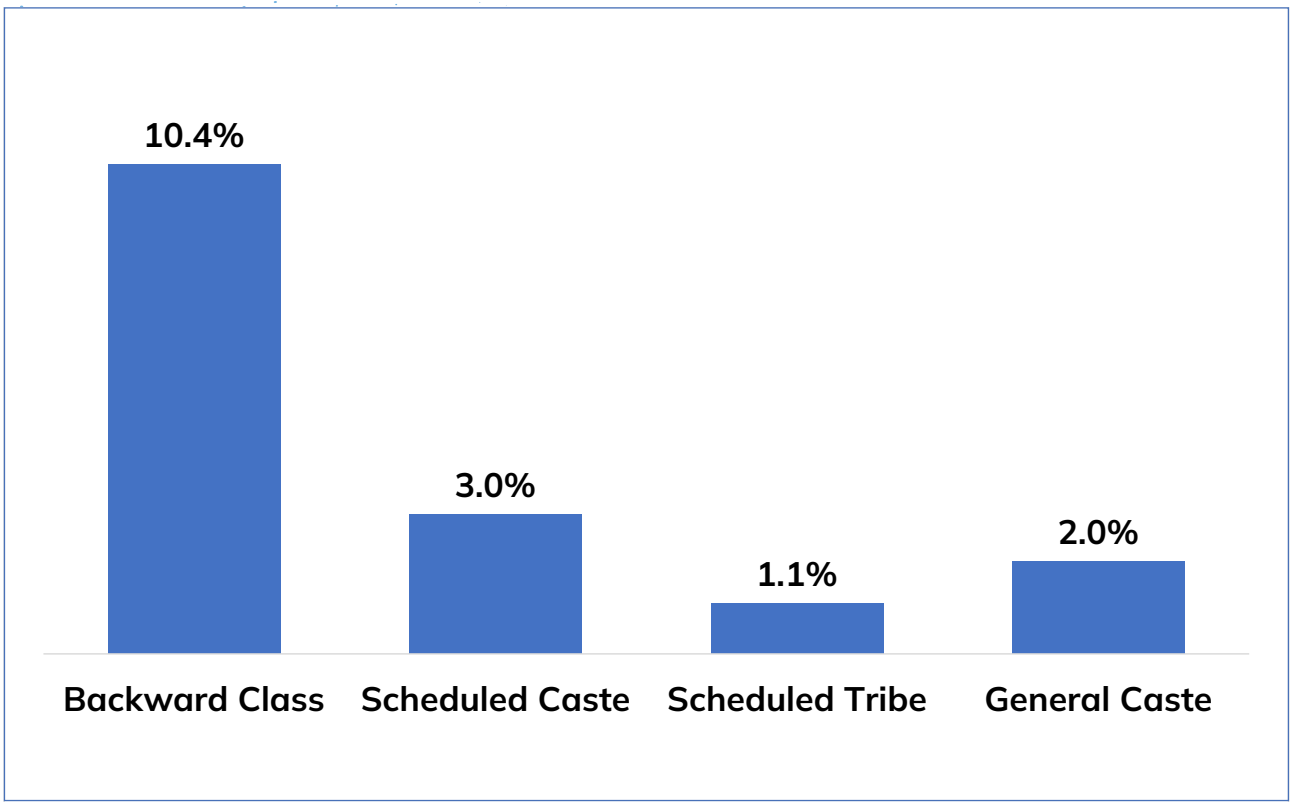


Figure 54: With professional government jobs

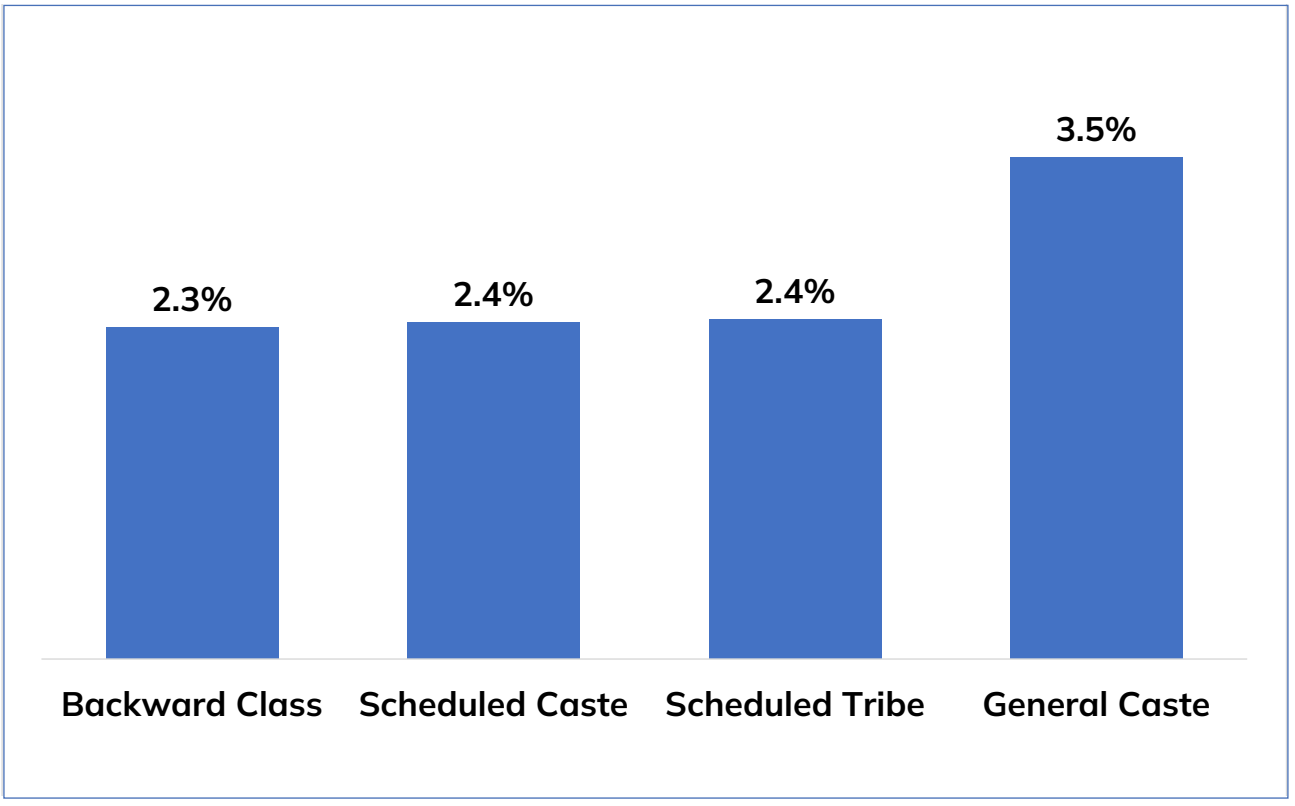


Figure 55: With professional private sector jobs

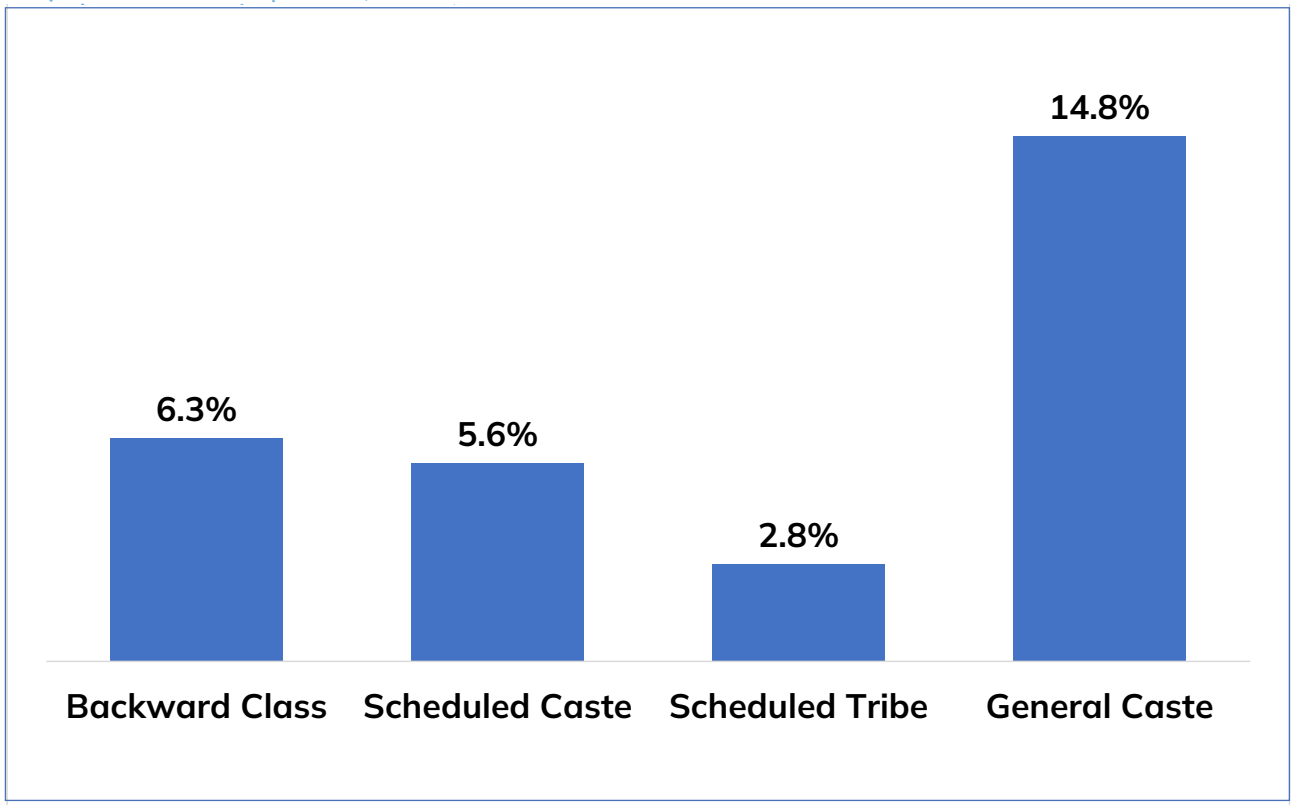


Figure 56: Own medium or large business

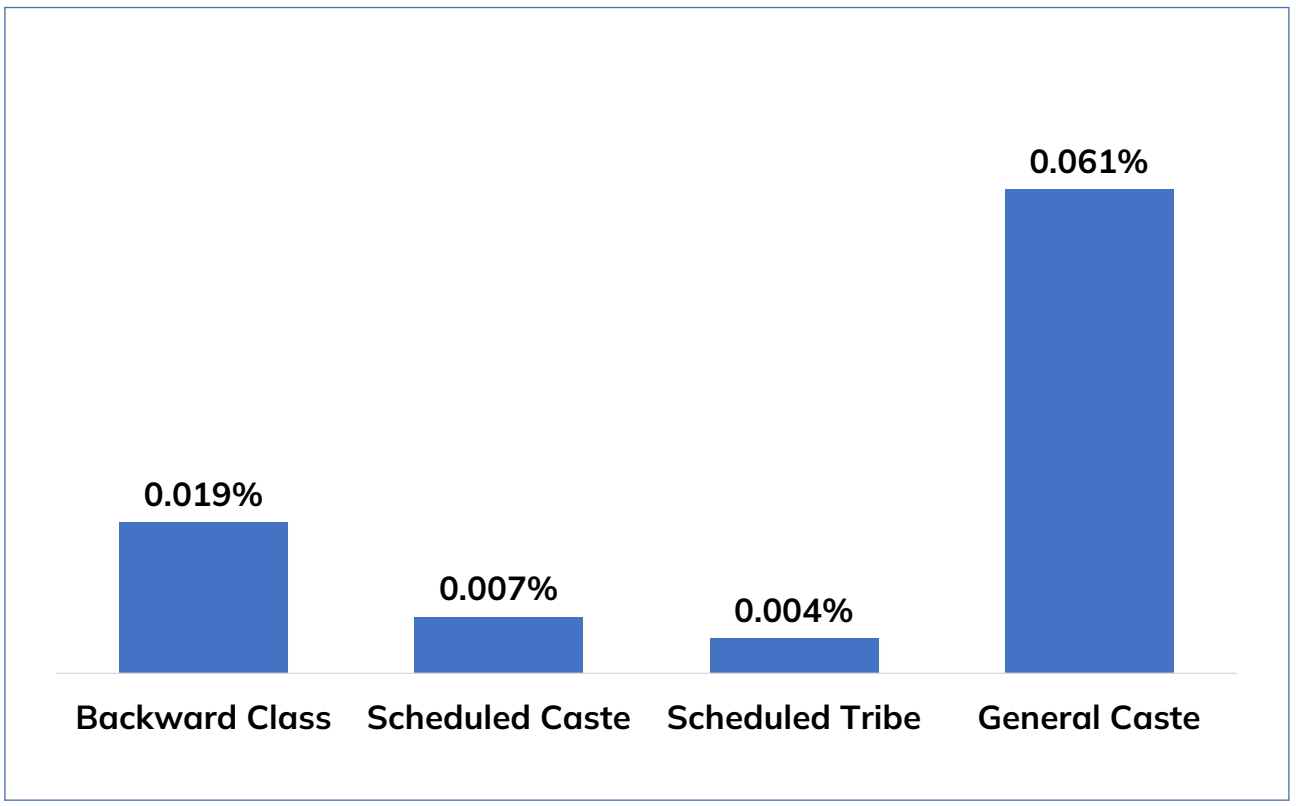


Figure 57: Annual Income <Rs. 1 lakh

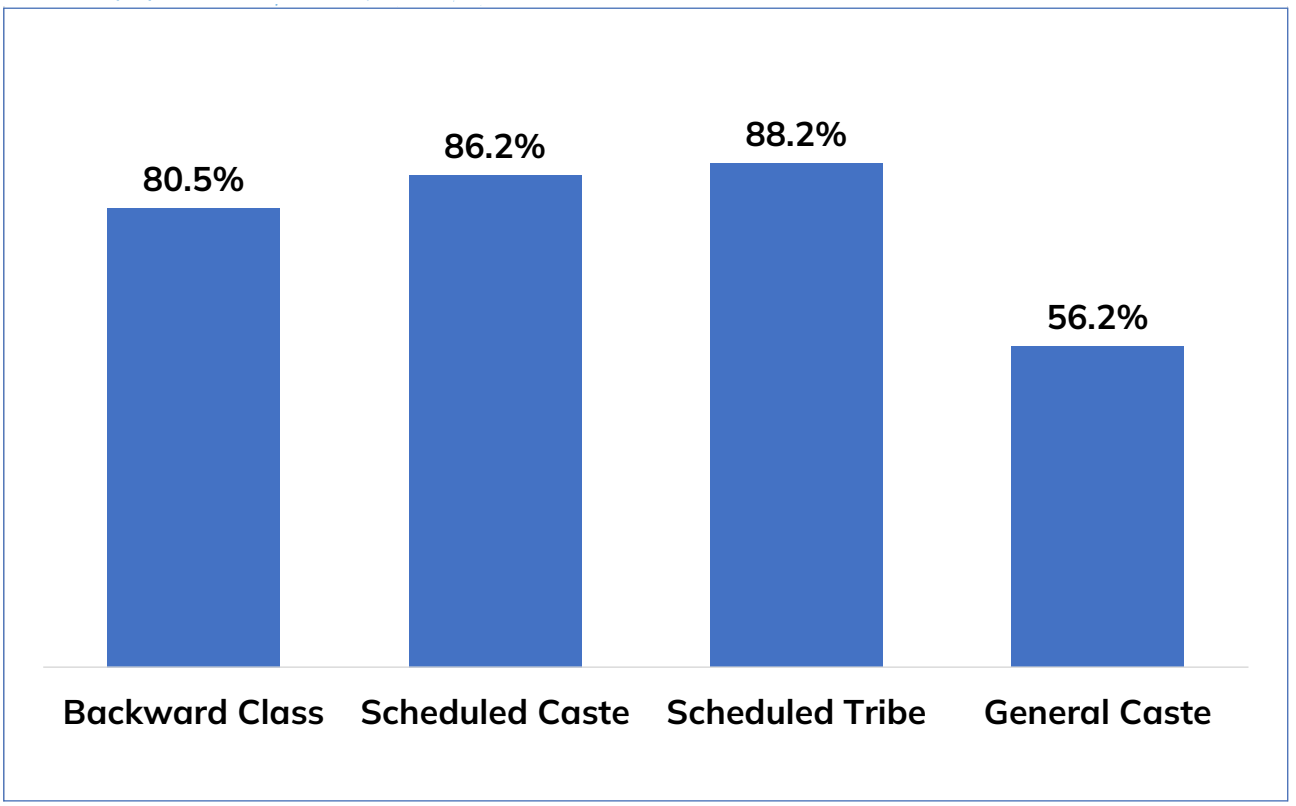


Figure 58: Annual Income Rs. 1-5 lakh

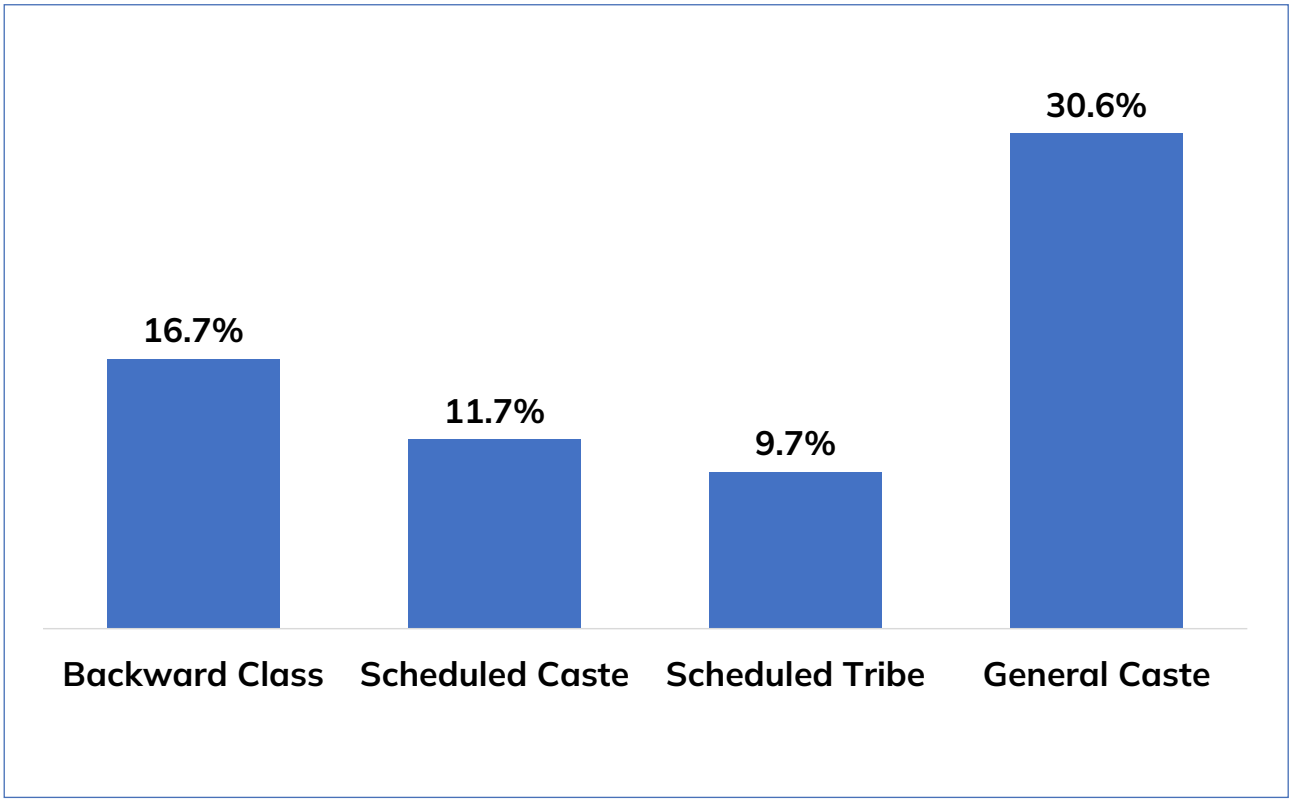


Figure 59: Annual Income >5 lac

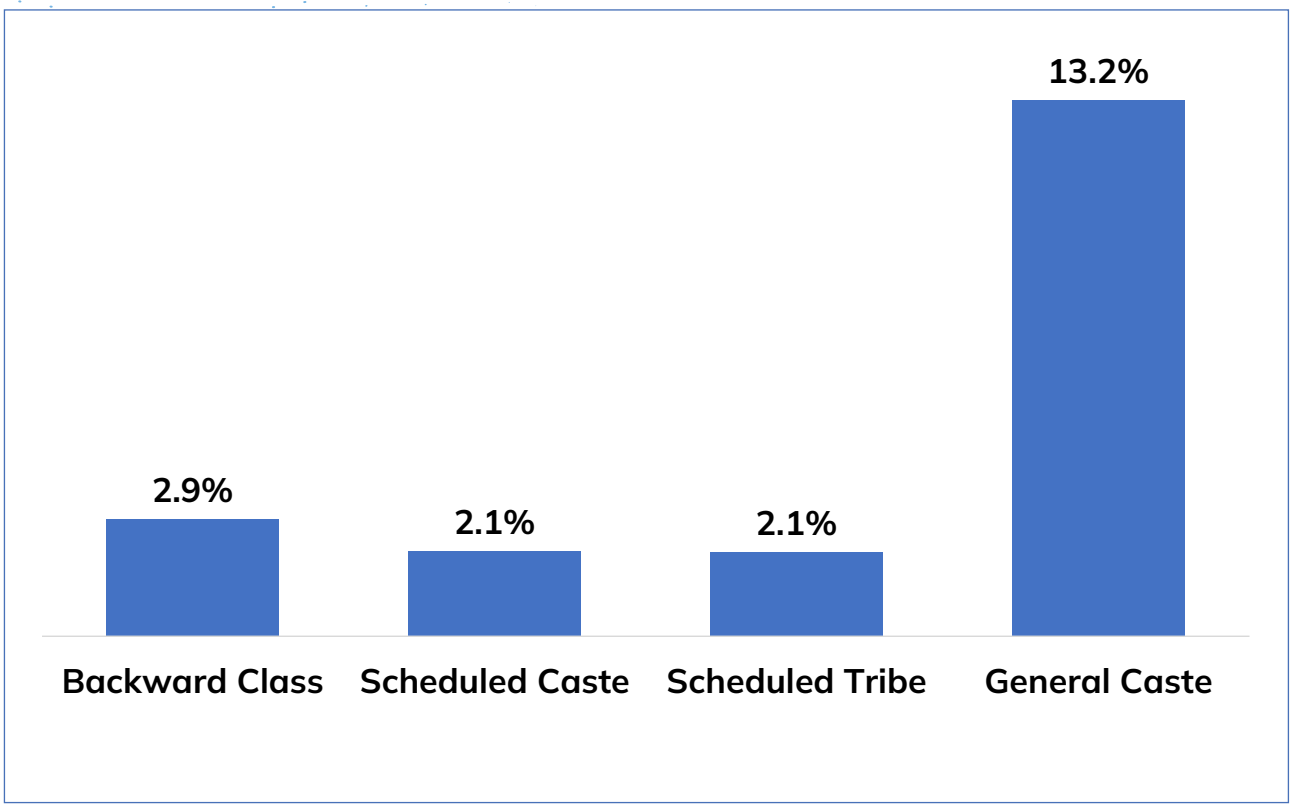


Figure 60: Income Tax payer

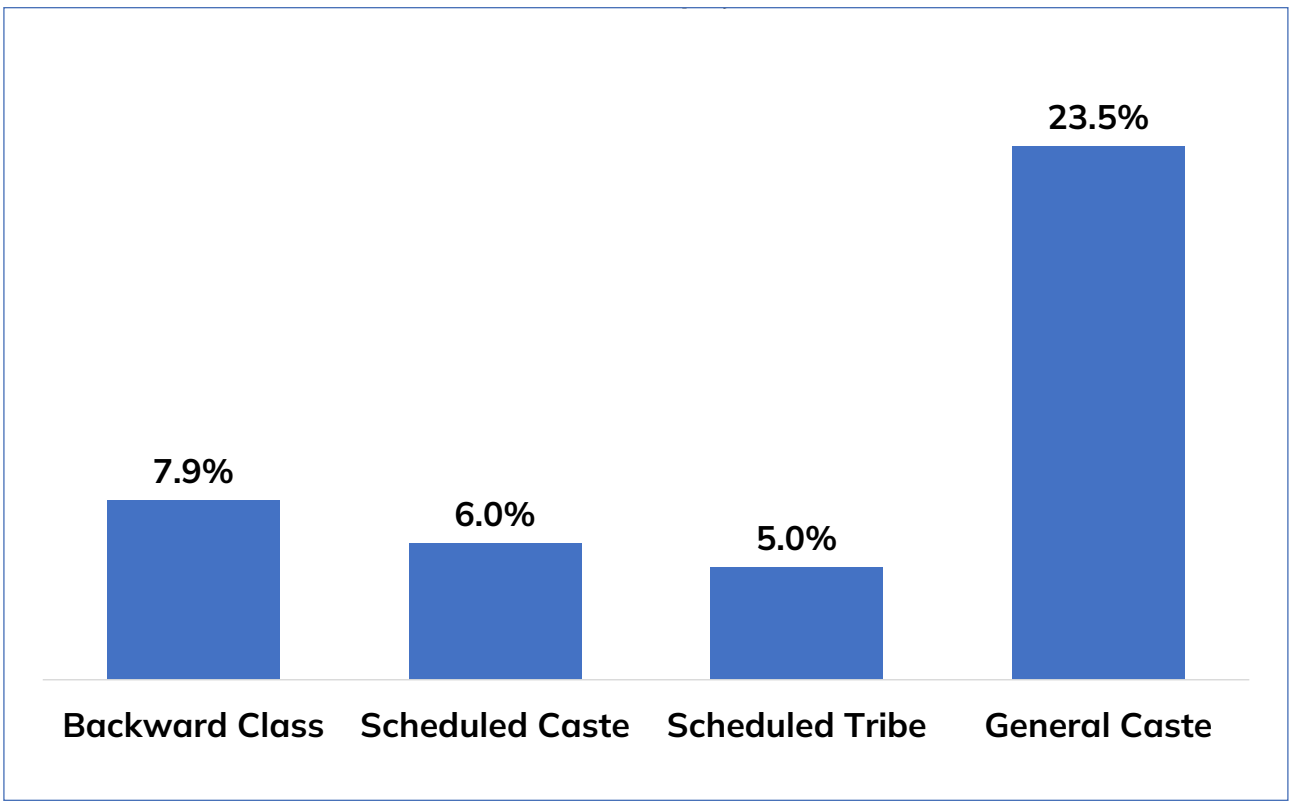


Figure 61: Own land

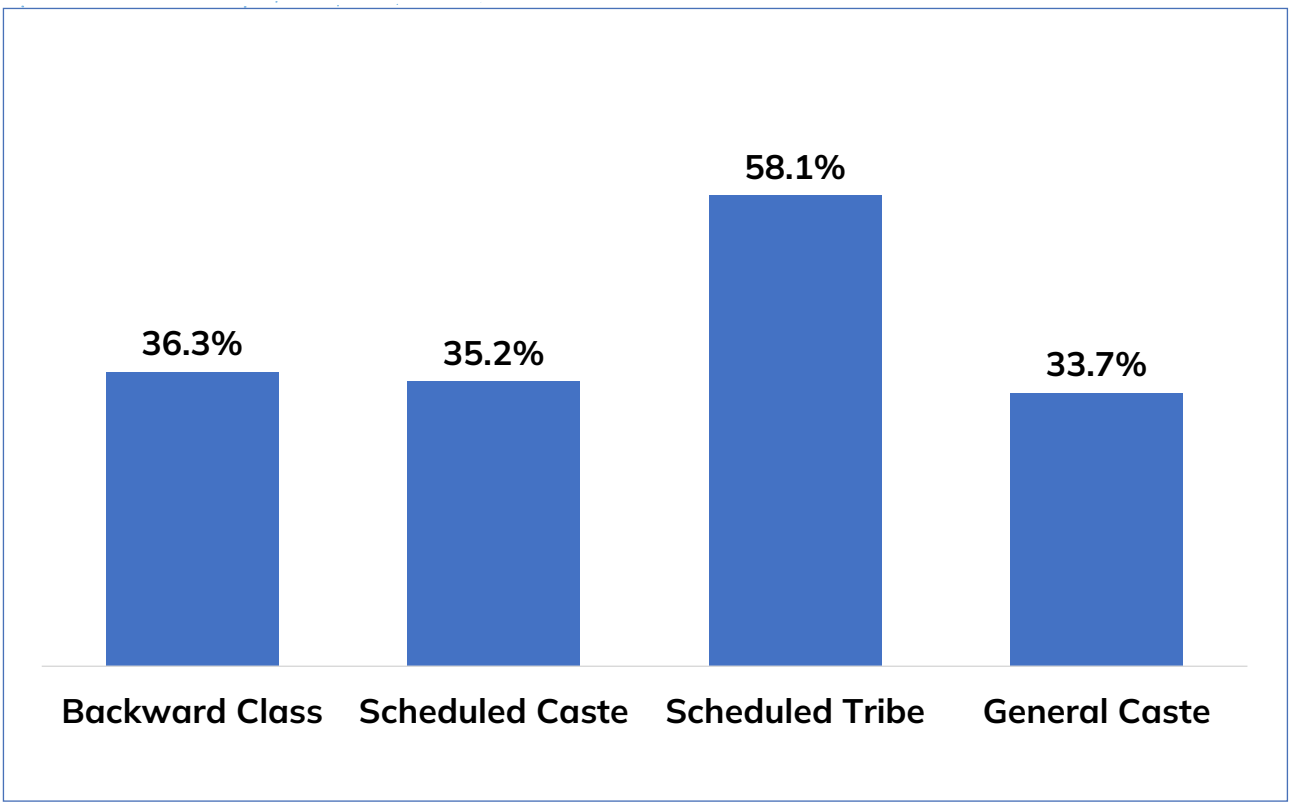


Figure 62: % of land irrigated

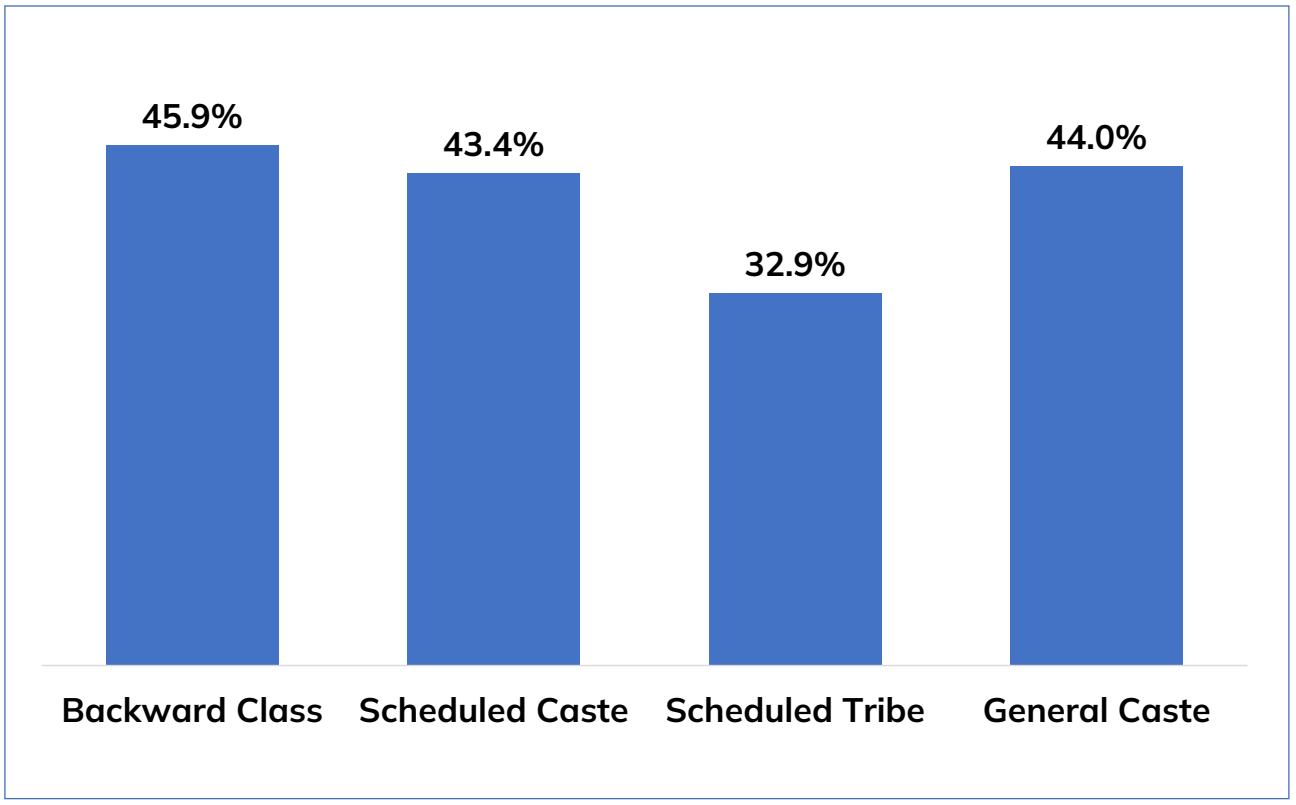


Figure 63: Avg irrigated land owned per family (acres)

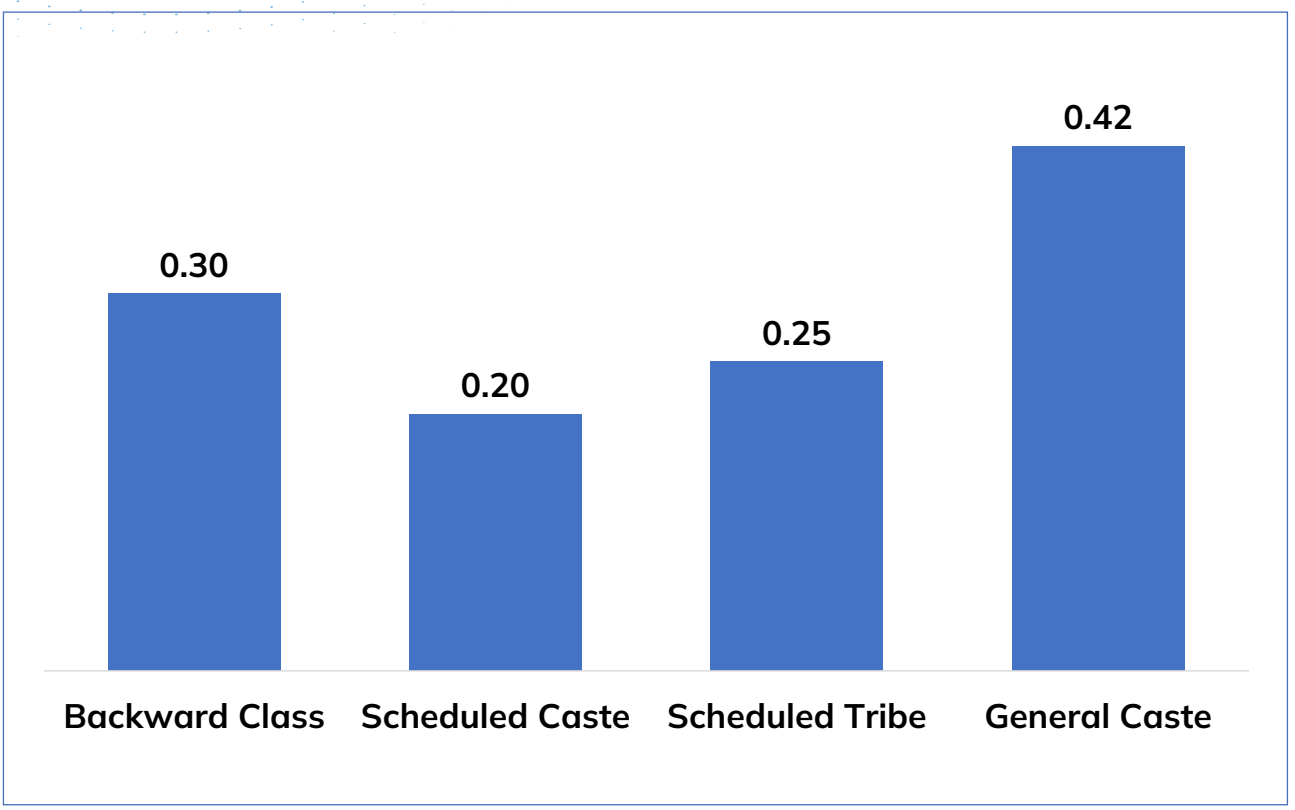


Figure 64: Families owning <5 acre land

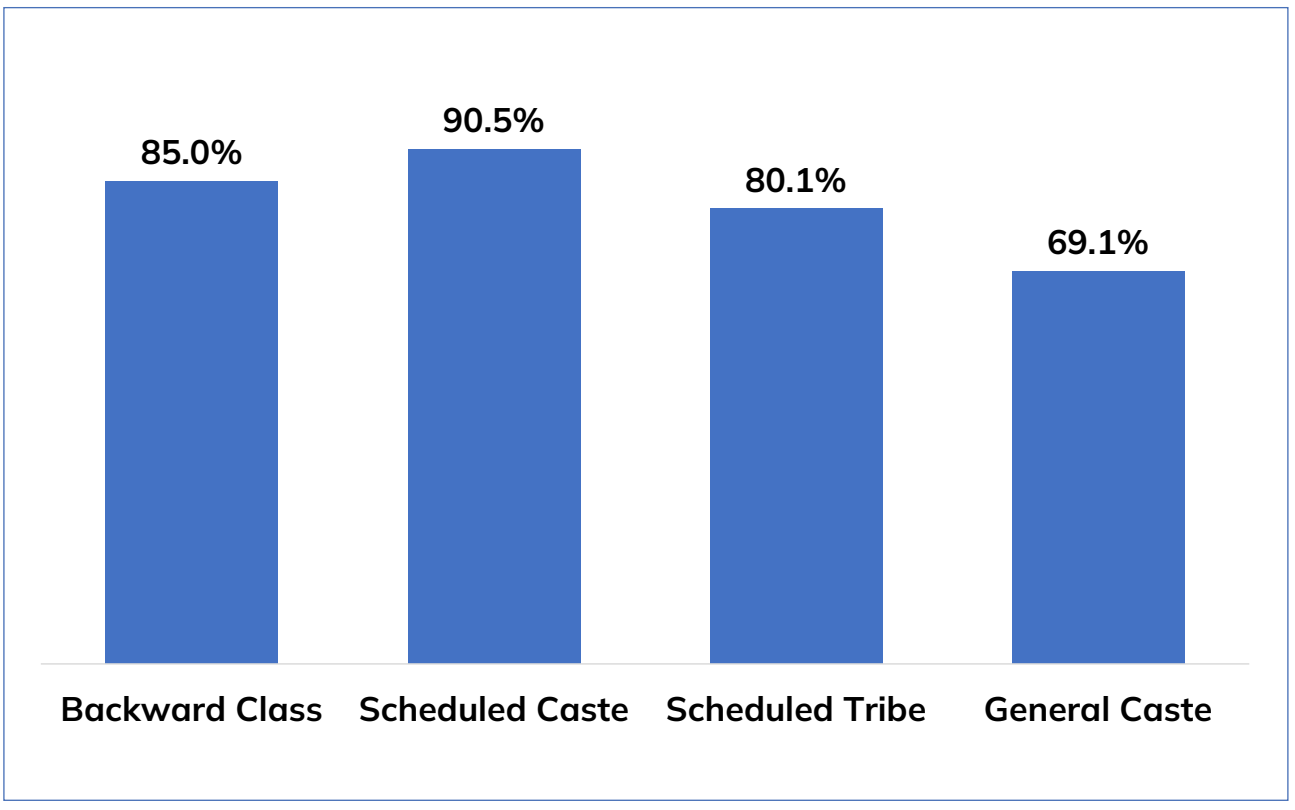


Figure 65: Families owning 5-20 acre land

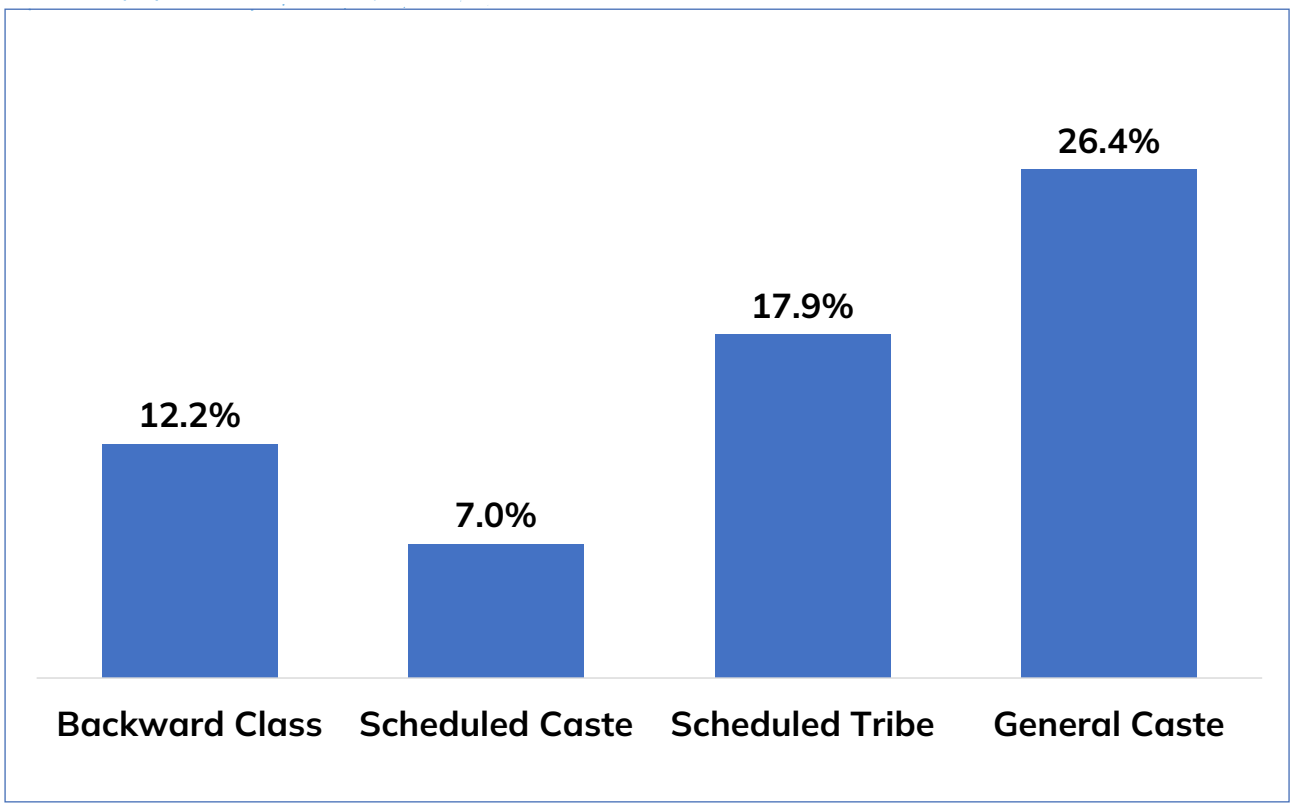


Figure 66: Families owning >20 acre land

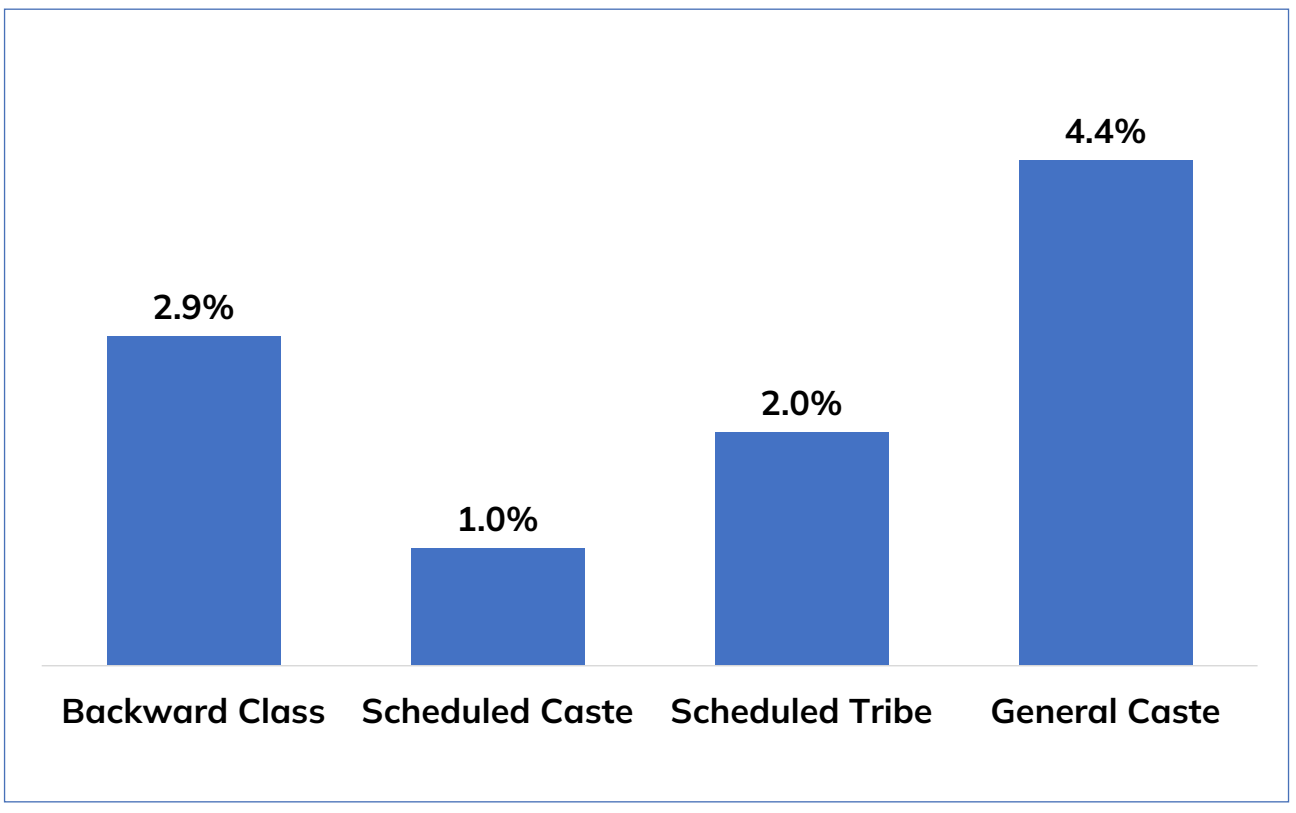


Figure 67: Share of Rural Population

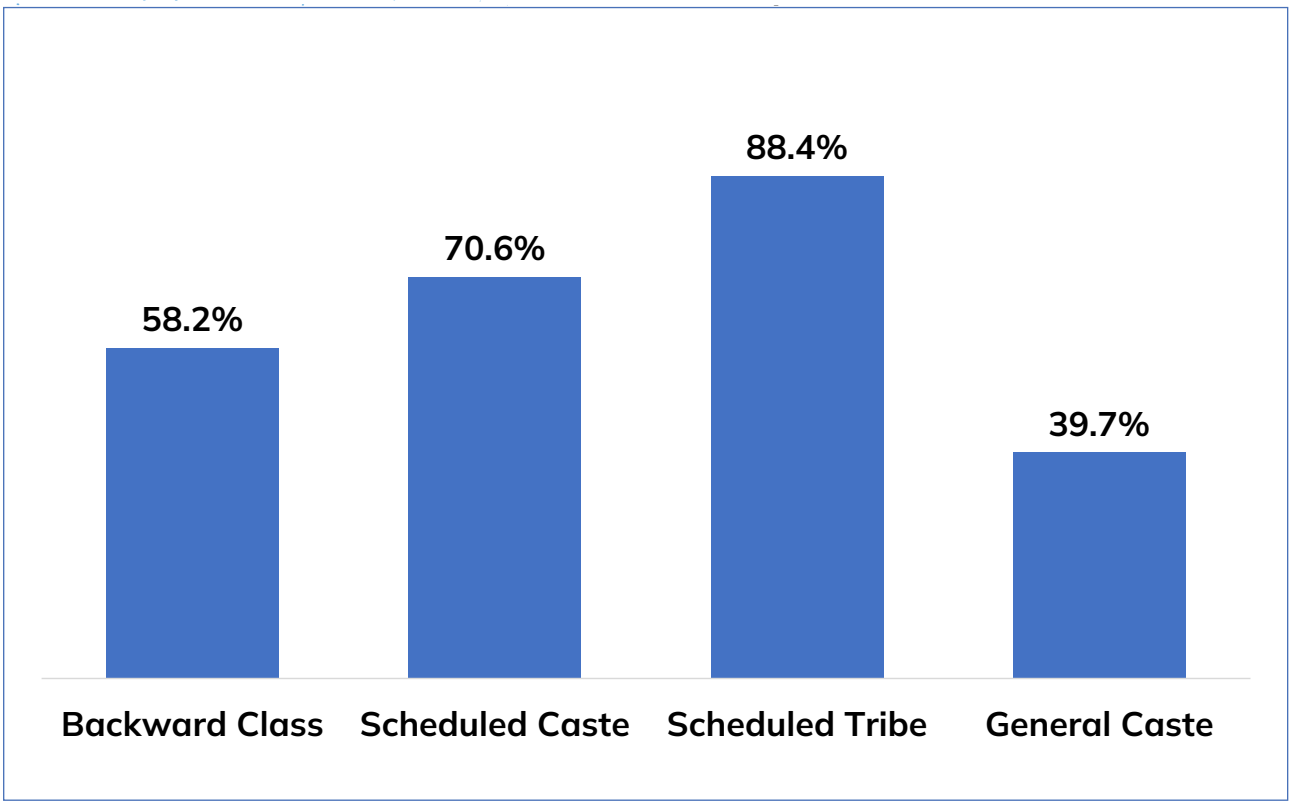


Figure 68: Households with refrigerator

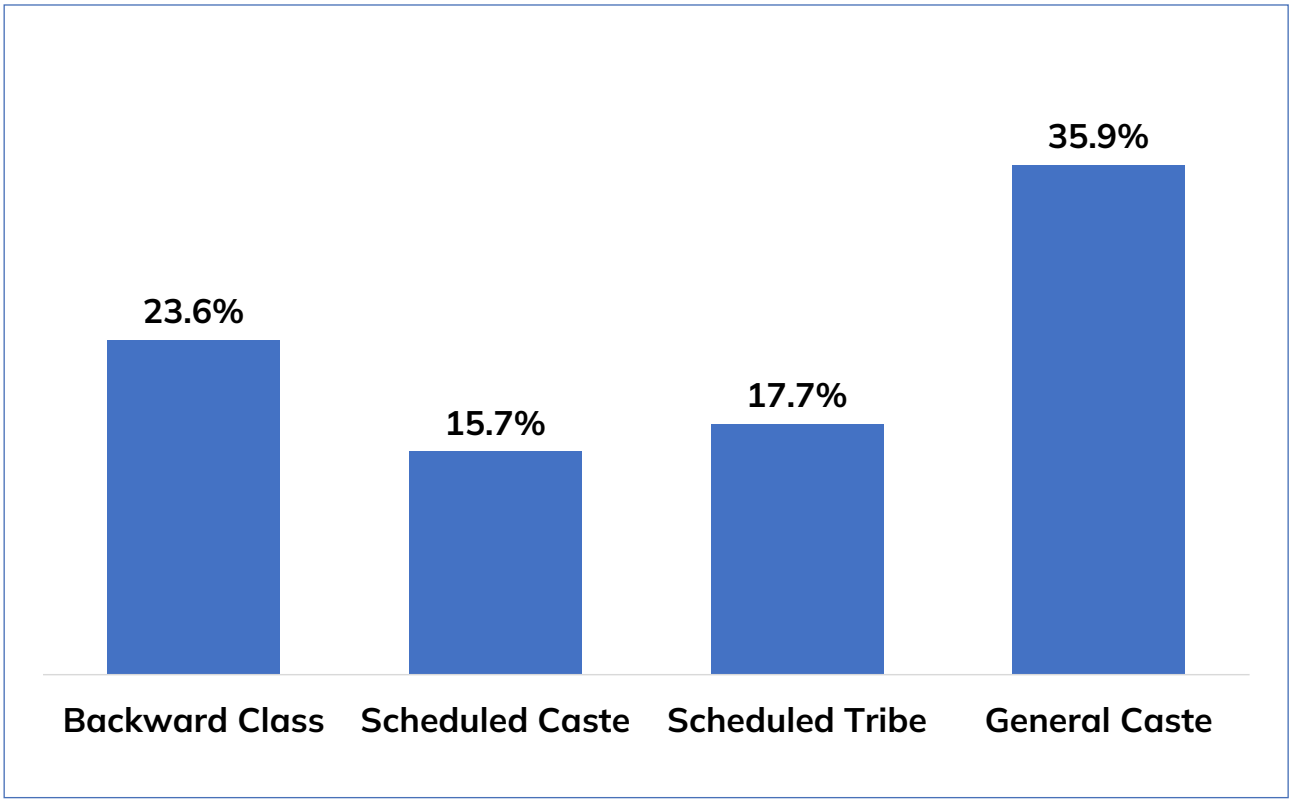


Figure 69: Households with car for personal use

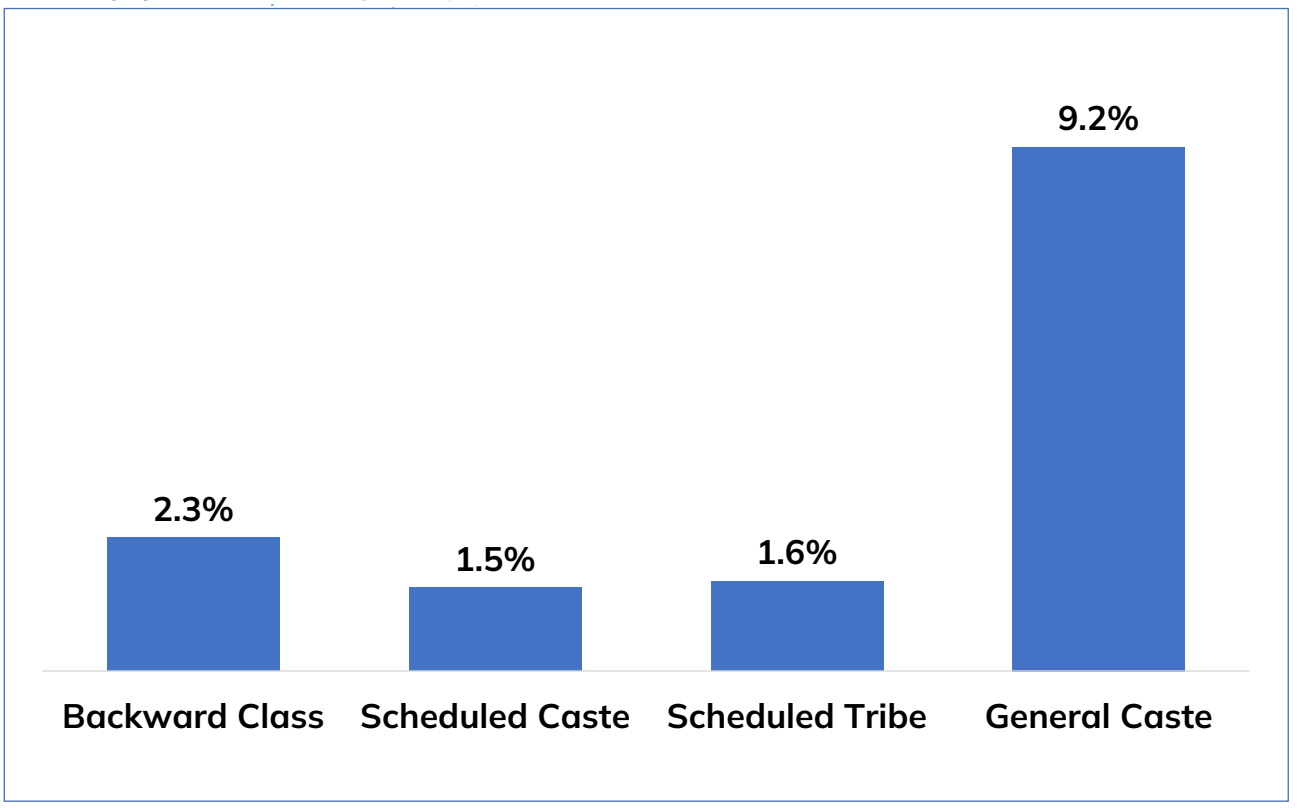


Figure 70: Households with less than 2 rooms

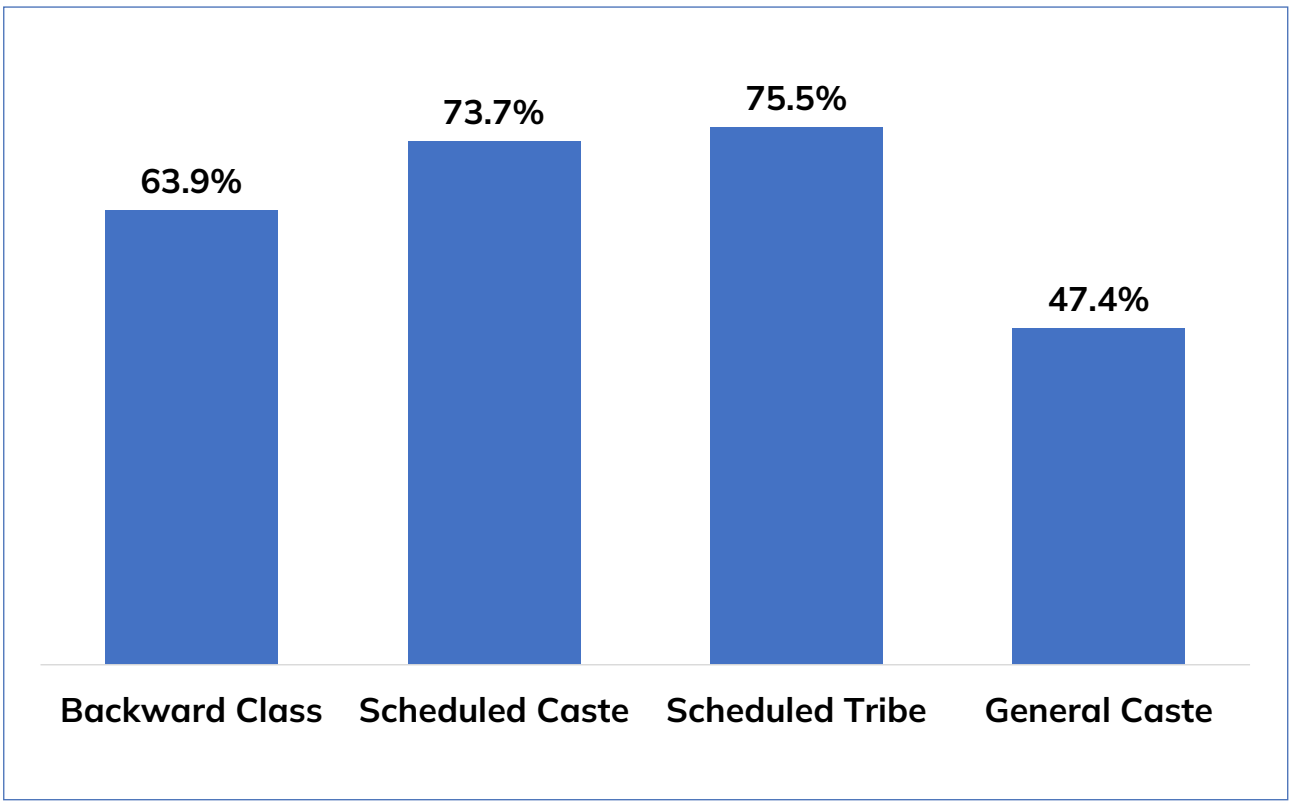


Figure 71: Households with more than 3 rooms

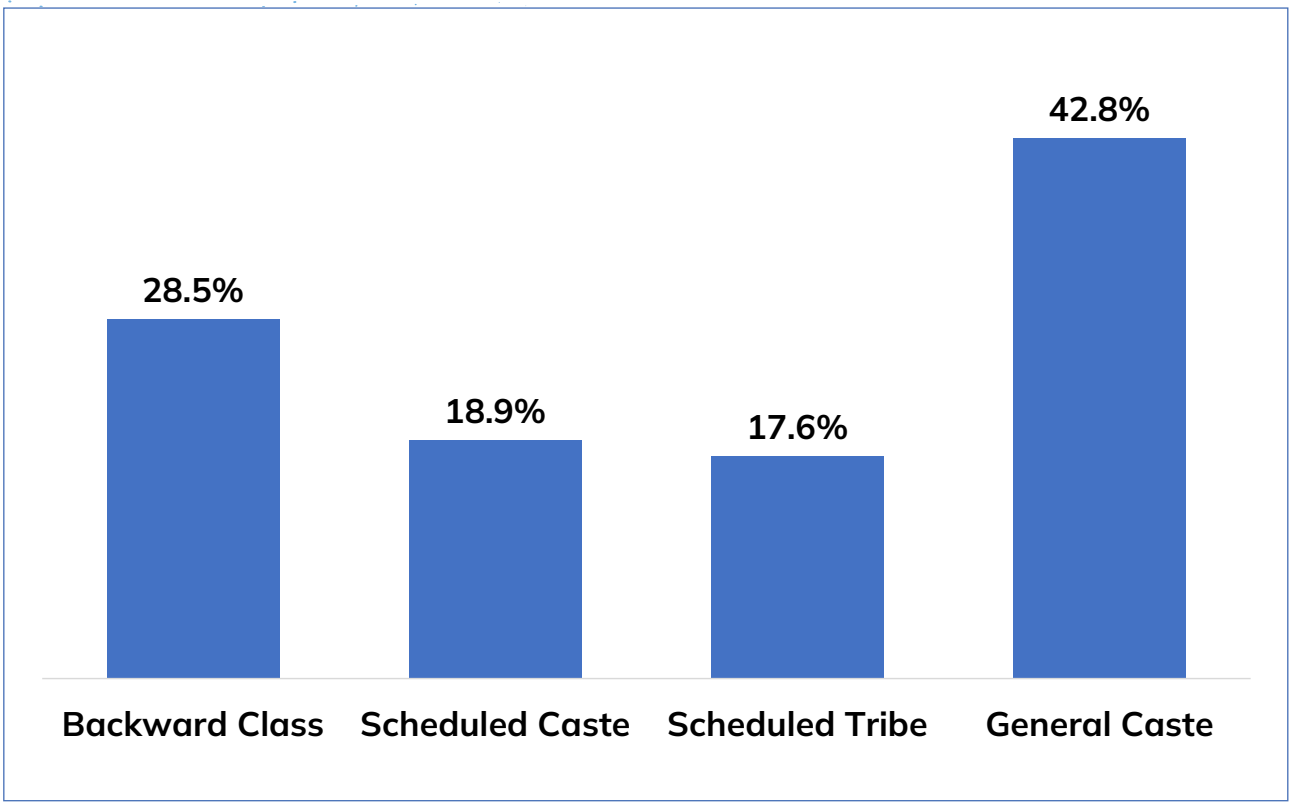


Figure 72: Households with no toilet

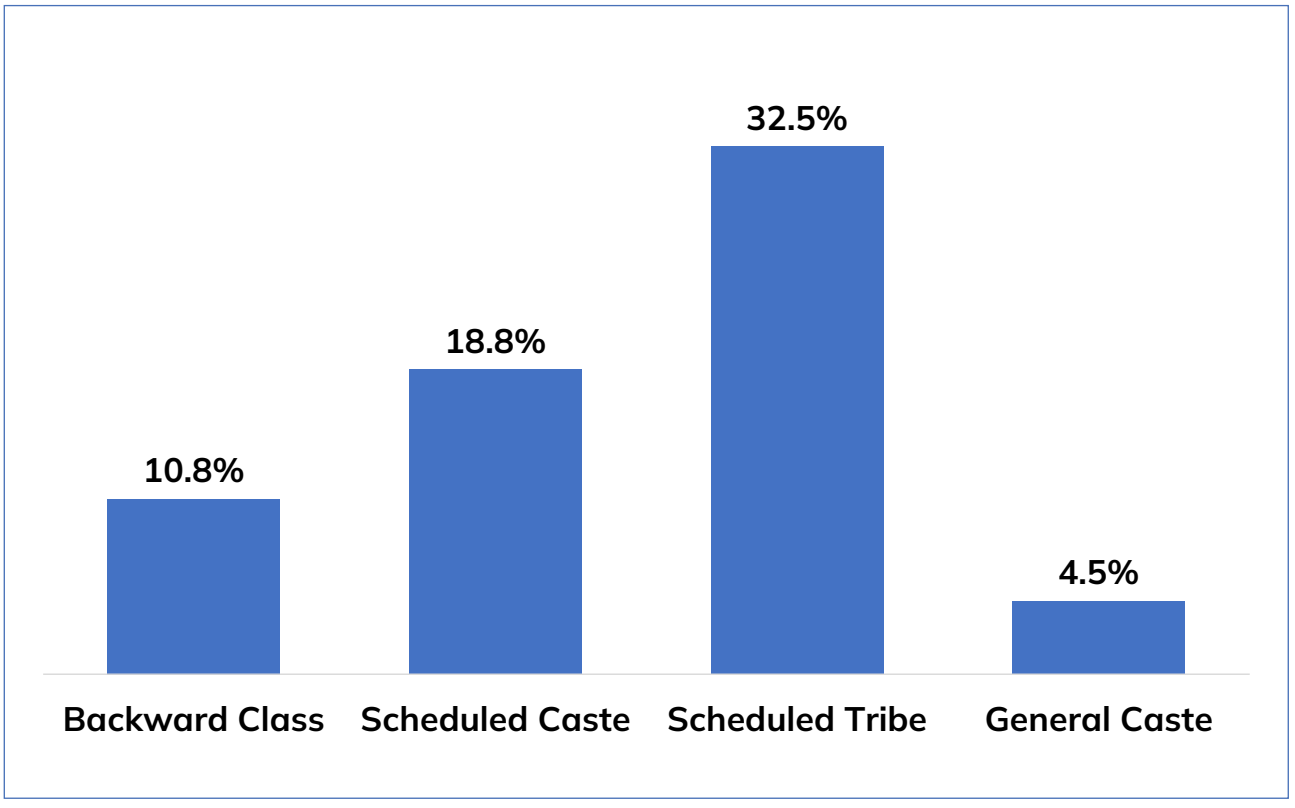


Figure 73: Households with no electricity

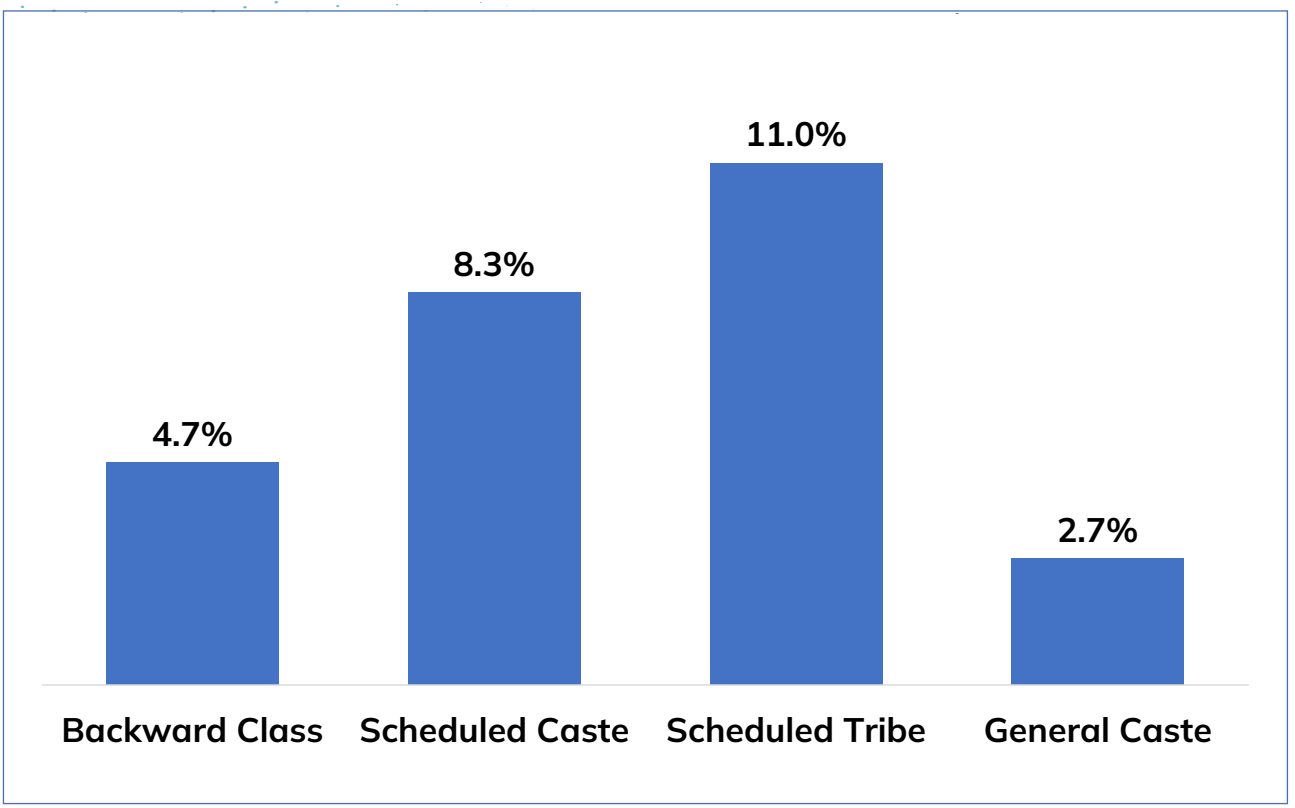


Figure 74: Households with no tap water

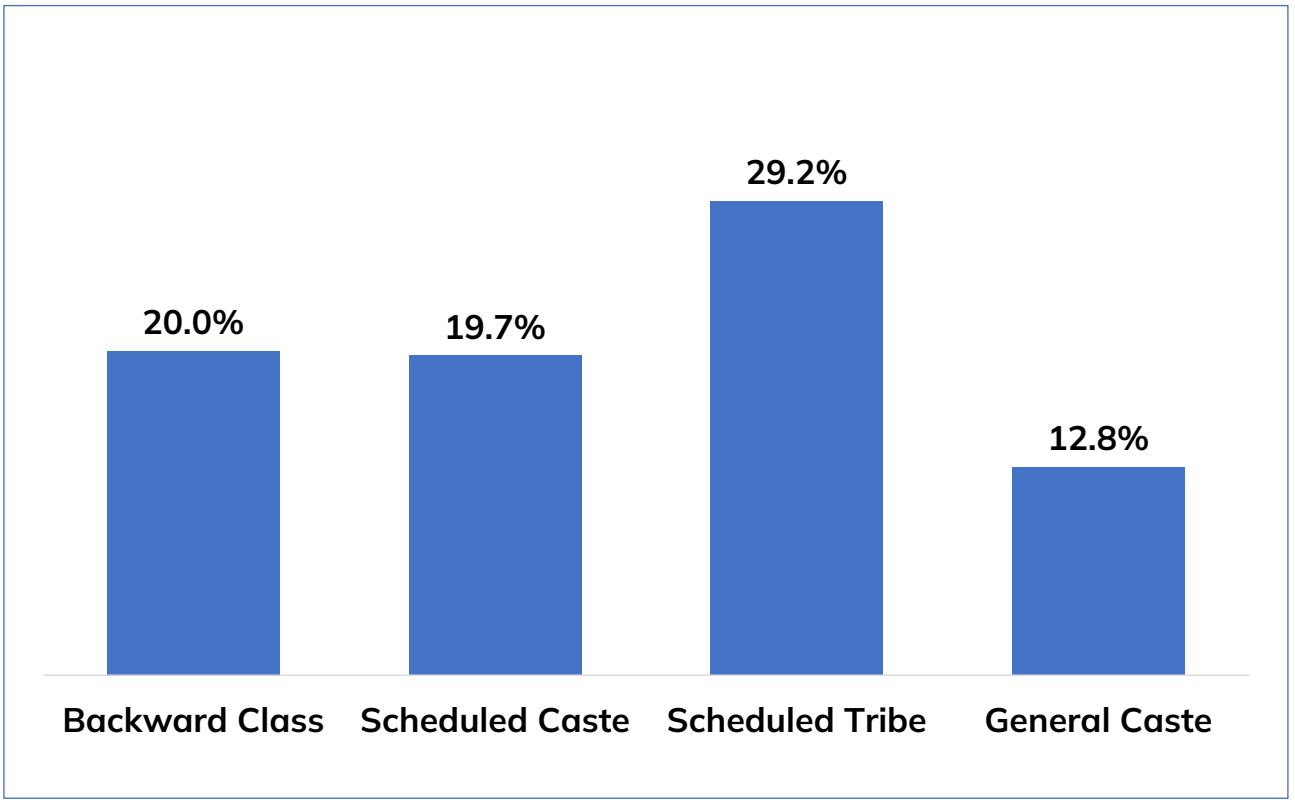


Figure 75: Loans for marriage or medical expenses

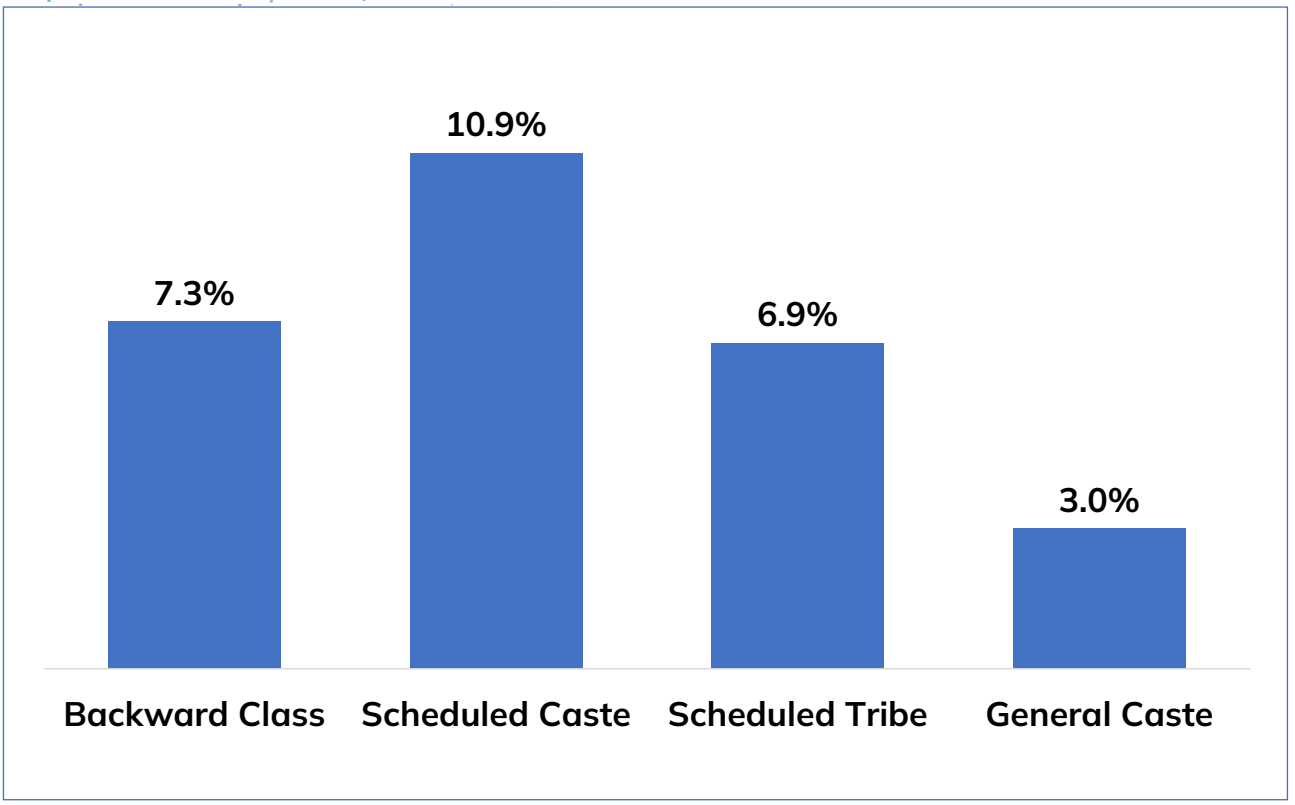
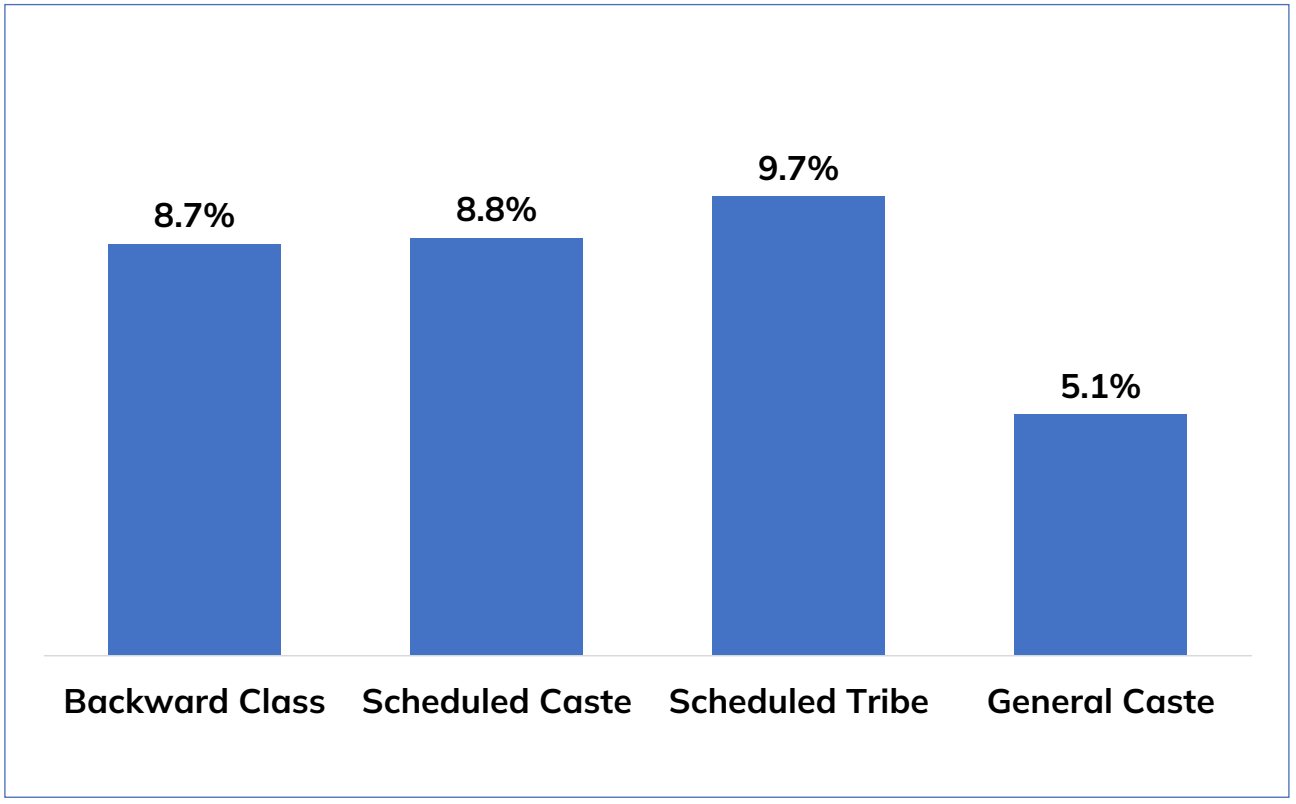


Figure 76: Loan borrowed from money lender



APPENDIX 3: CBI PARAMETERS: HIGH-LOW RANGE

CBI Parameters: Most & Least Backward caste

		State Average	Highest		Lowest	
			Value	Caste	Value	Caste
	Social Discrimination					
1	Discriminated to visit place of worship	5.7%	10.4%	BC-A Gangiredlavaru	1.6%	OC Iyengars/Iyer
2	Families with inter-caste marriage	5.6%	11.9%	OC Iyengars/Iyer	2.6%	ST Kolam
	Gender					
3	Female to Male ratio	97.9%	103.4%	ST Gond	90.7%	OC Iyengars/Iyer
4	Girl Child marriage	4.8%	8.1%	BC-A Gangiredlavaru	2.1%	OC Kapu
5	Share of women studied below 10th	65.5%	82.9%	ST Kolam	36.2%	OC Brahmins
	Education					
6	Illiterate Children	4.1%	9.3%	ST Kolam	2.3%	BC-B Perika
7	School Dropout rate of Children	2.2%	5.4%	ST Kolam	1.1%	OC Brahmins
8	Population studied only upto primary	38.1%	43.2%	ST Kolam	17.6%	OC Kapu
9	Intermediate Education	56.4%	83.6%	SC Mundala	31.3%	SC Mang
10	Population with diploma or above	20.3%	37.6%	OC Komati	4.4%	ST Kolam
11	Children attending state govt school	39.5%	54.4%	SC Mahar	9.7%	OC Jains
12	Children attending private school	9.8%	38.3%	OC Brahmins	1.1%	ST Kolam
13	Youth studied in English medium	47.0%	72.4%	OC Brahmins	10.7%	ST Kolam
	Occupation					
14	Daily Wage Labourers	31.3%	55.6%	BC-A Odde	2.6%	OC Brahmins
15	Child Labour	1.0%	3.3%	ST Kolam	0.1%	OC Brahmins
16	Daily Wage vendors	4.7%	10.9%	BC-B Vadrangi	0.8%	ST Kolam
17	MGNREGA Workers	1.0%	2.4%	SC Mala Sale	0.0%	OC Brahmins
18	Agricultural Labourer	19.4%	50.4%	ST Kolam	0.7%	OC Brahmins
19	Continuing Traditional Occupation	6.8%	29.4%	BC-A Rajaka	0.6%	ST Lambadis
20	With professional government jobs	2.8%	16.9%	OC Iyengars/Iyer	0.6%	ST Kolam
21	With professional private sector jobs	7.4%	26.9%	OC Raju	0.6%	ST Kolam
22	Own medium or large business	0.0%	0.2%	OC Komati	0.0%	ST Koya
	Income					
23	Annual Income>0; <1 lac	78.2%	95.4%	ST Kolam	32.6%	OC Brahmins
24	Annual Income>1 lac; <5 lac	17.4%	39.3%	OC Raju	4.2%	ST Kolam
25	Annual Income>5 lac	4.4%	30.1%	OC Brahmins	0.3%	ST Kolam
26	Income Tax payer	10.3%	46.1%	OC Brahmins	2.5%	ST Kolam
	Land Ownership					
27	Own land	35.6%	63.6%	BC-B Kuruba Kuruma	4.9%	OC Raju
28	% of land irrigated	43.0%	58.1%	BC-B Perika	8.3%	ST Kolam
29	Avg irrigated land owned per family (a	1.7	0.8	BC-B Perika	0.02	ST Kolam
30	Families owning <5 acre land	82.3%	91.4%	SC Madiga	58.3%	OC Raju
31	Families owning 5-20 acre land	14.9%	34.2%	OC Raju	6.0%	SC Madiga
32	Families owning >20 acre land	2.6%	8.3%	OC Jains	0.3%	SC Madiga
	Living Conditions					
33	Share of Rural Population	57.9%	97.2%	ST Kolam	7.4%	OC Jains
34	Households with refrigerator	22.6%	42.4%	OC Komati	3.2%	ST Kolam
35	Households with car for personal use	3.2%	16.4%	OC Brahmins	0.2%	ST Kolam
36	Households with less than 2 rooms	63.5%	86.8%	ST Kolam	32.6%	OC Brahmins
37	Households with more than 3 rooms	27.5%	55.1%	OC Komati	6.2%	ST Kolam
38	Households with no toilet	13.3%	64.4%	ST Kolam	2.3%	OC Brahmins
39	Households with no electricity	5.8%	27.6%	ST Kolam	0.8%	OC Jains
40	Households with no tap water	20.4%	64.7%	ST Kolam	3.2%	OC Jains
	Financial Condition					
41	Loans for marriage or medical expense	2.4%	14.7%	SC Beda	1.0%	OC Jains
42	Loan borrowed from money lender	6.8%	24.2%	SC Beda	2.3%	BC-B Are Marath

APPENDIX 4: WELFARE SCHEMES: DO THE MOST BACKWARD CASTES BENEFIT?

Figure 77: Kalyana Lakshmi/Shadi Mubarak

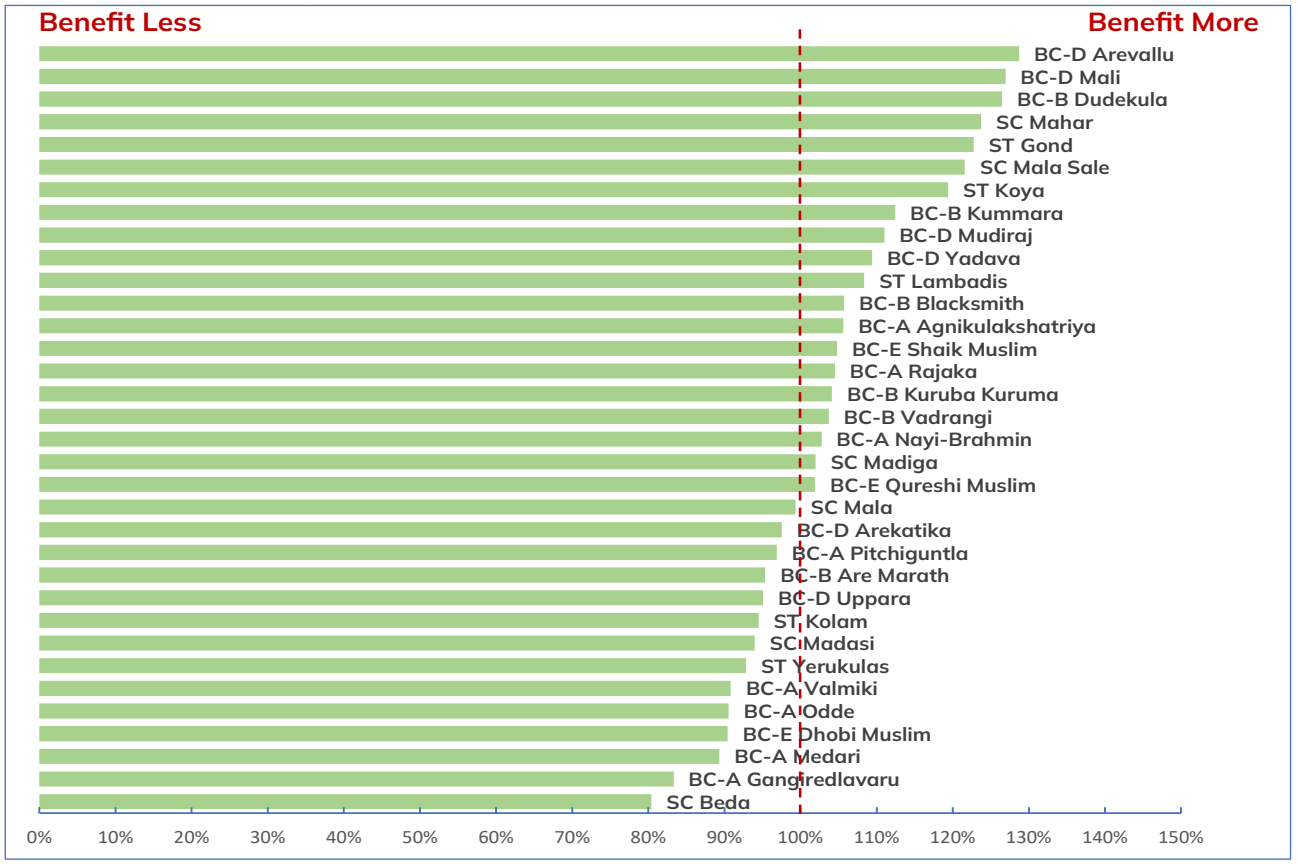


Figure 78: Cheyutha Pension

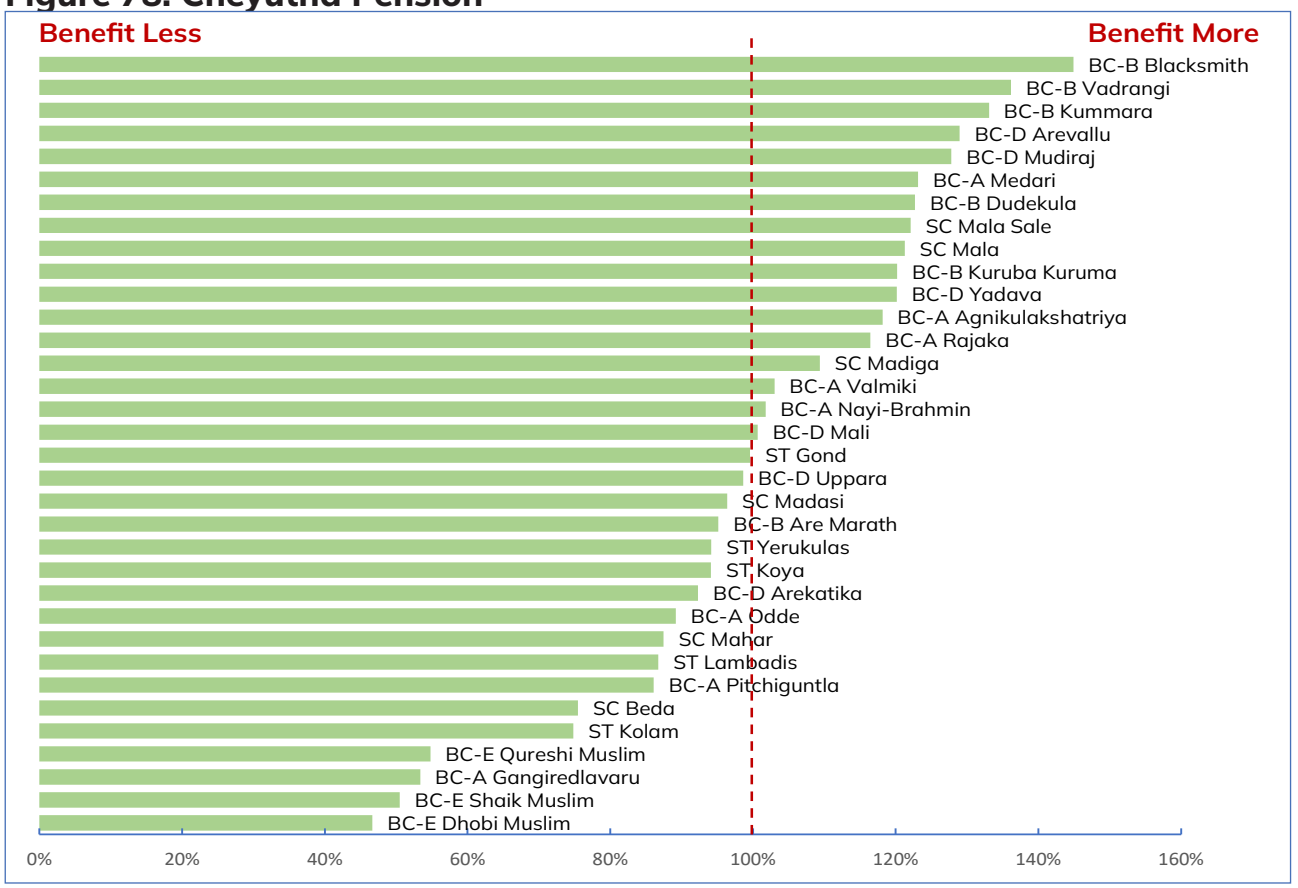


Figure 79: Rythu Bharosa

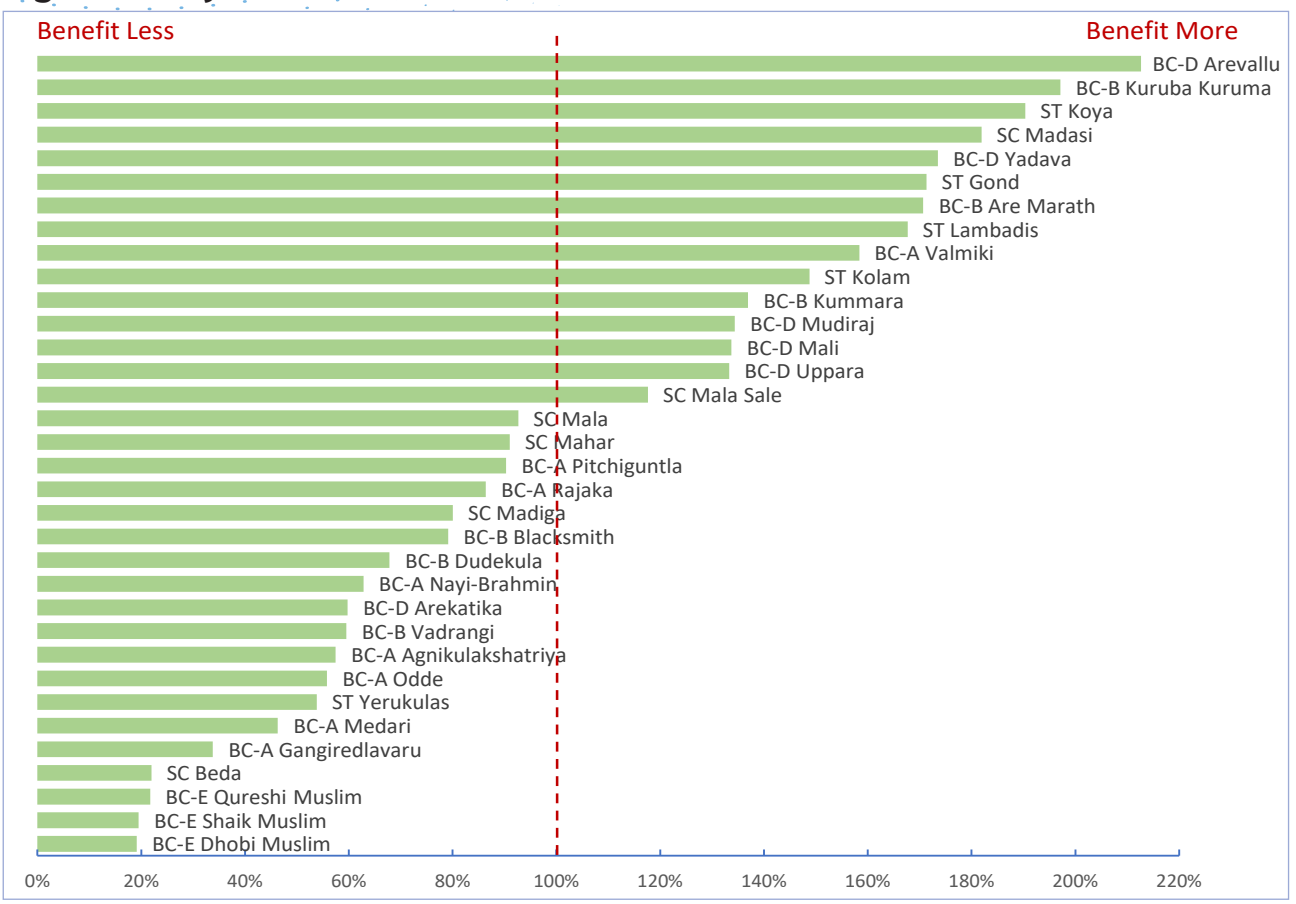


Figure 80: Rythu Bhima

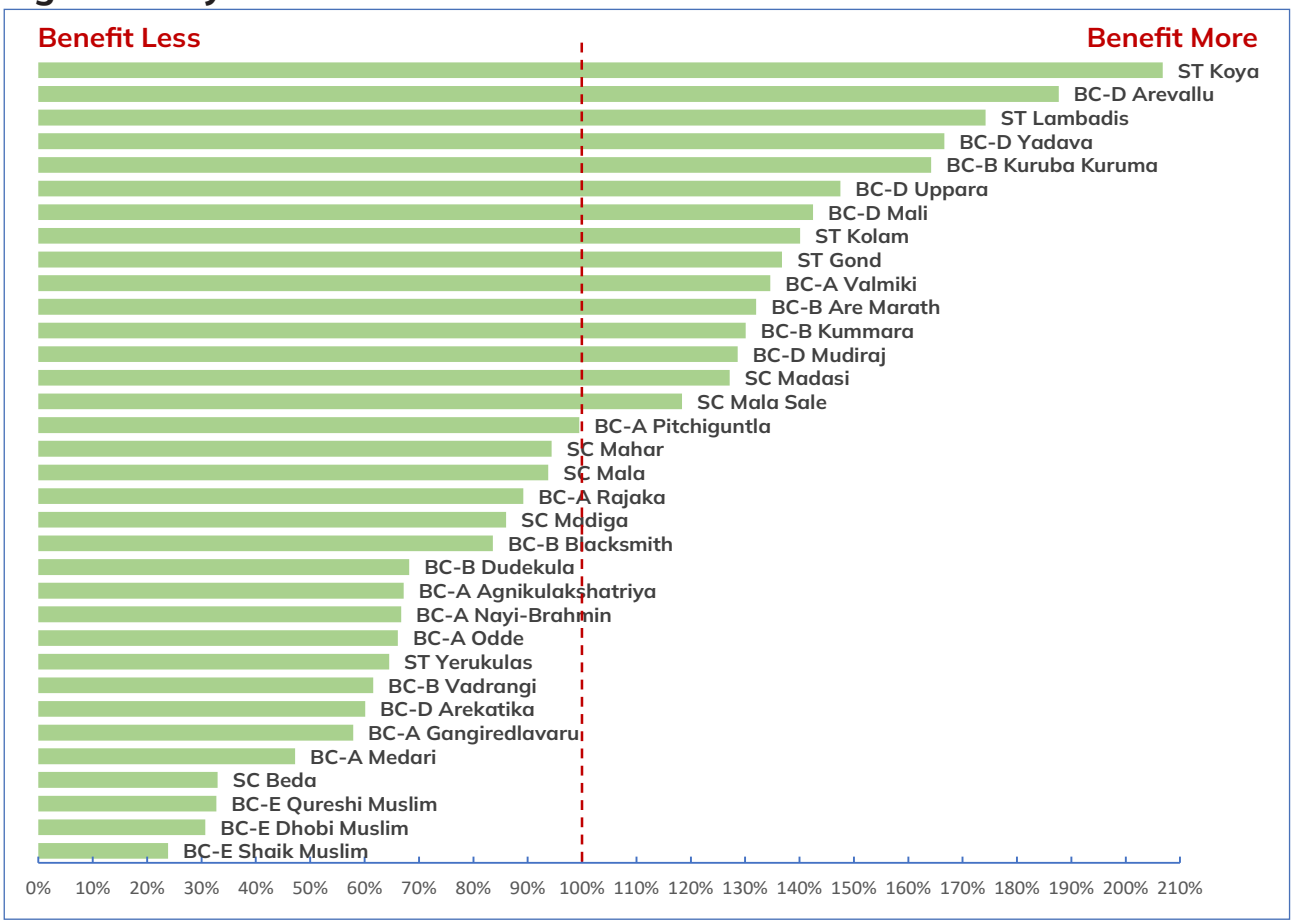


Figure 81: Arogyasri

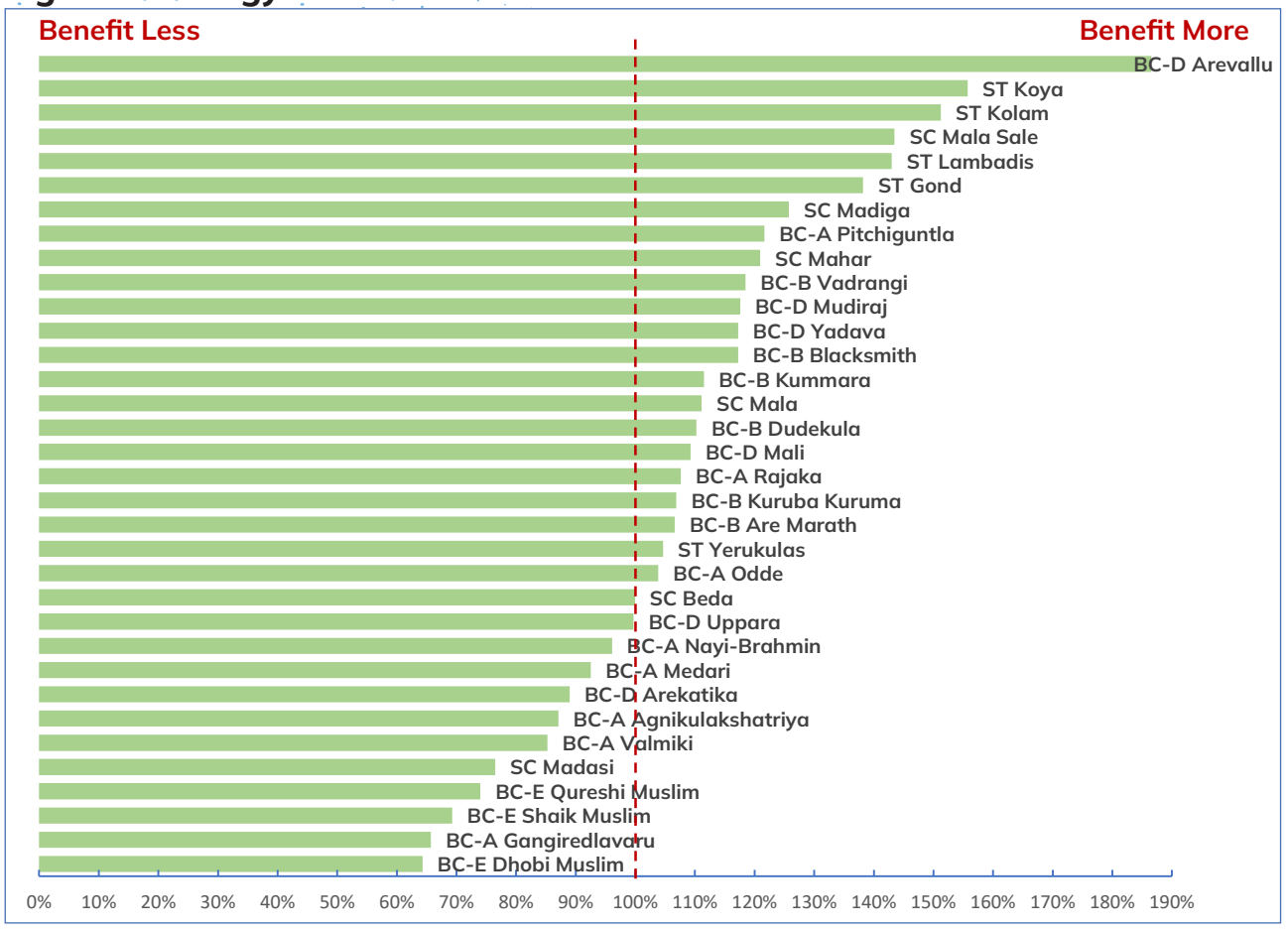


Figure 82: Free Electricity for Agriculture

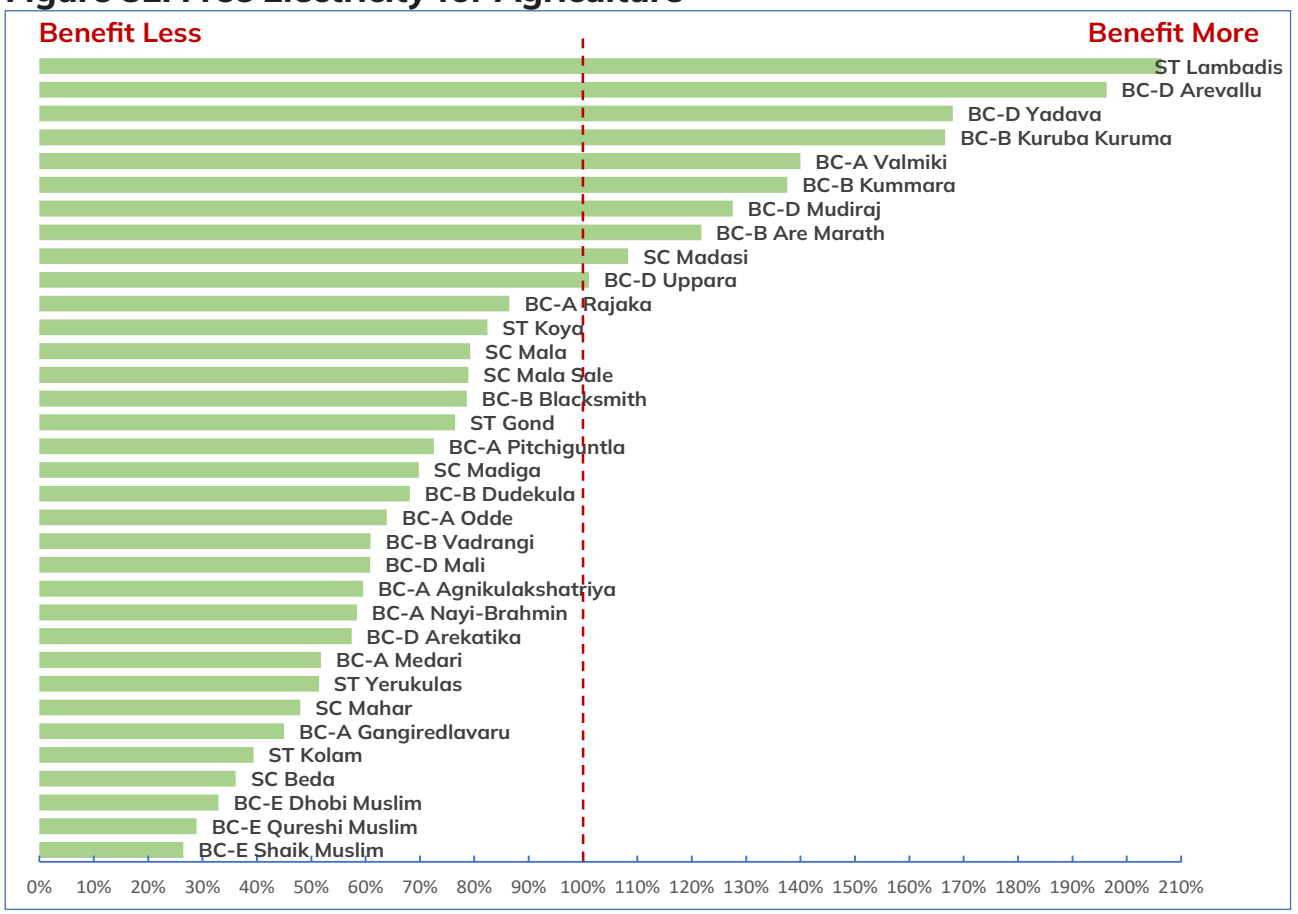


Figure 83: Gruha Jyothi: Free electricity to home

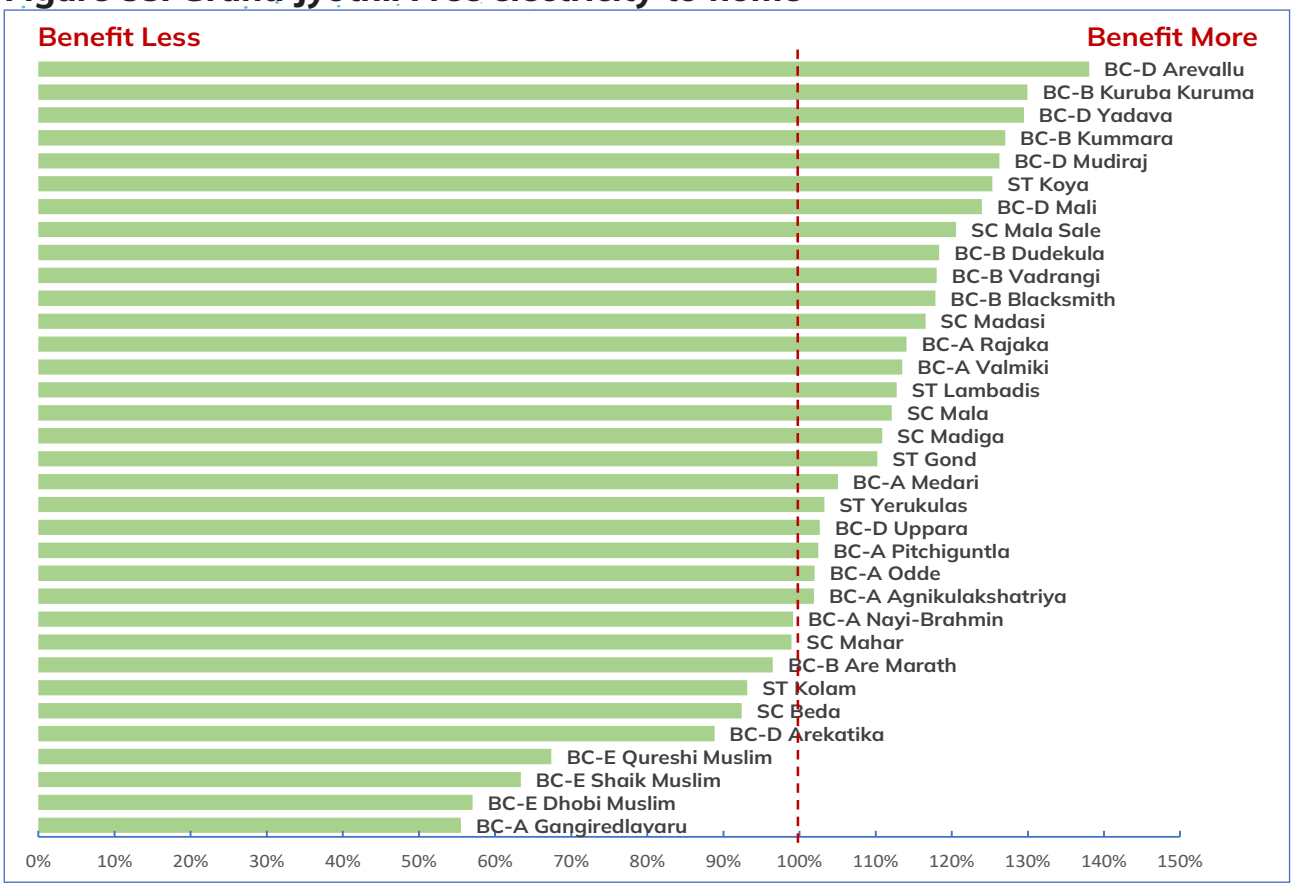


Figure 84: Subsidised LPG Cylinder

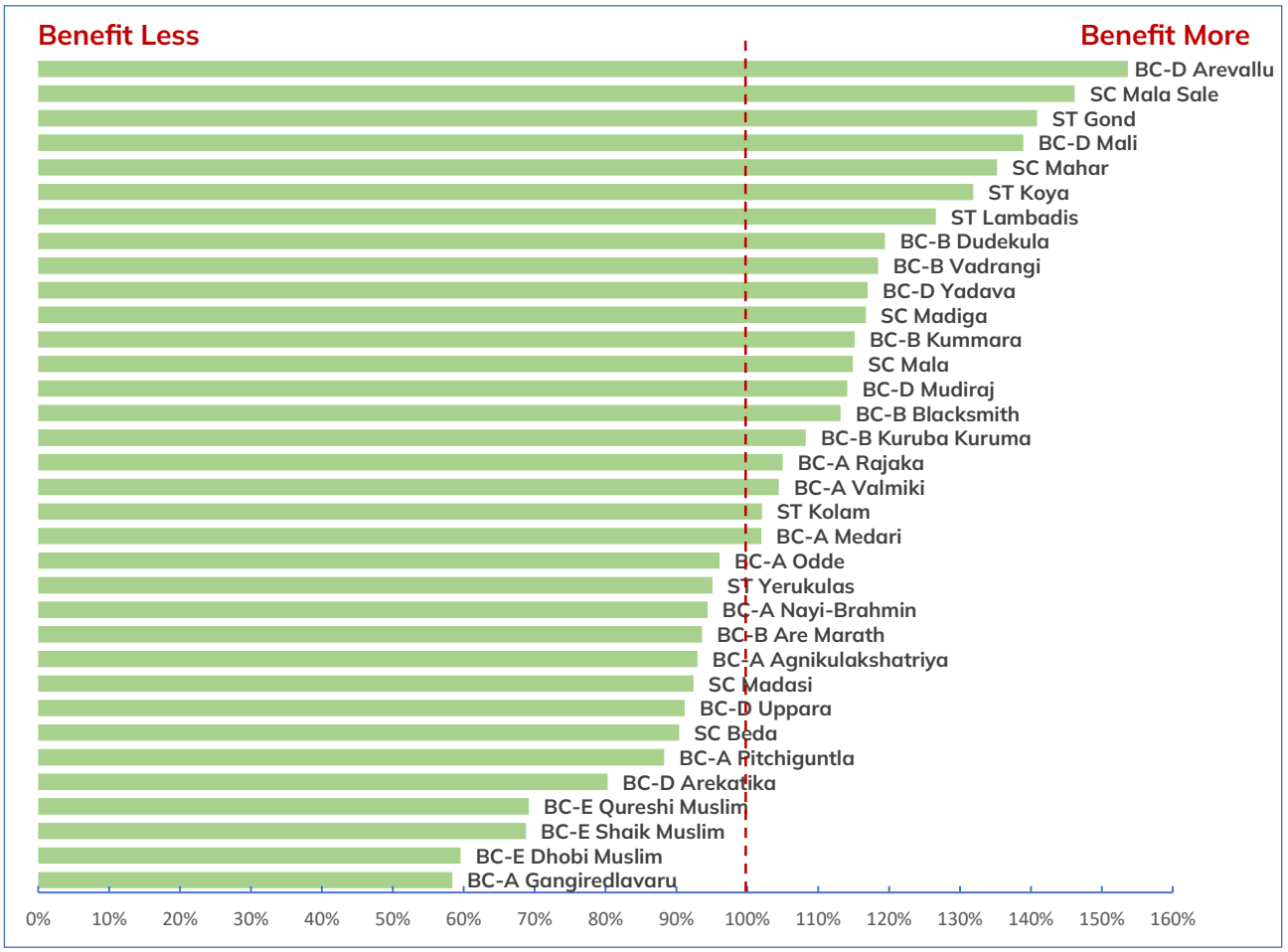


Figure 85: Free Bus Travel for Women

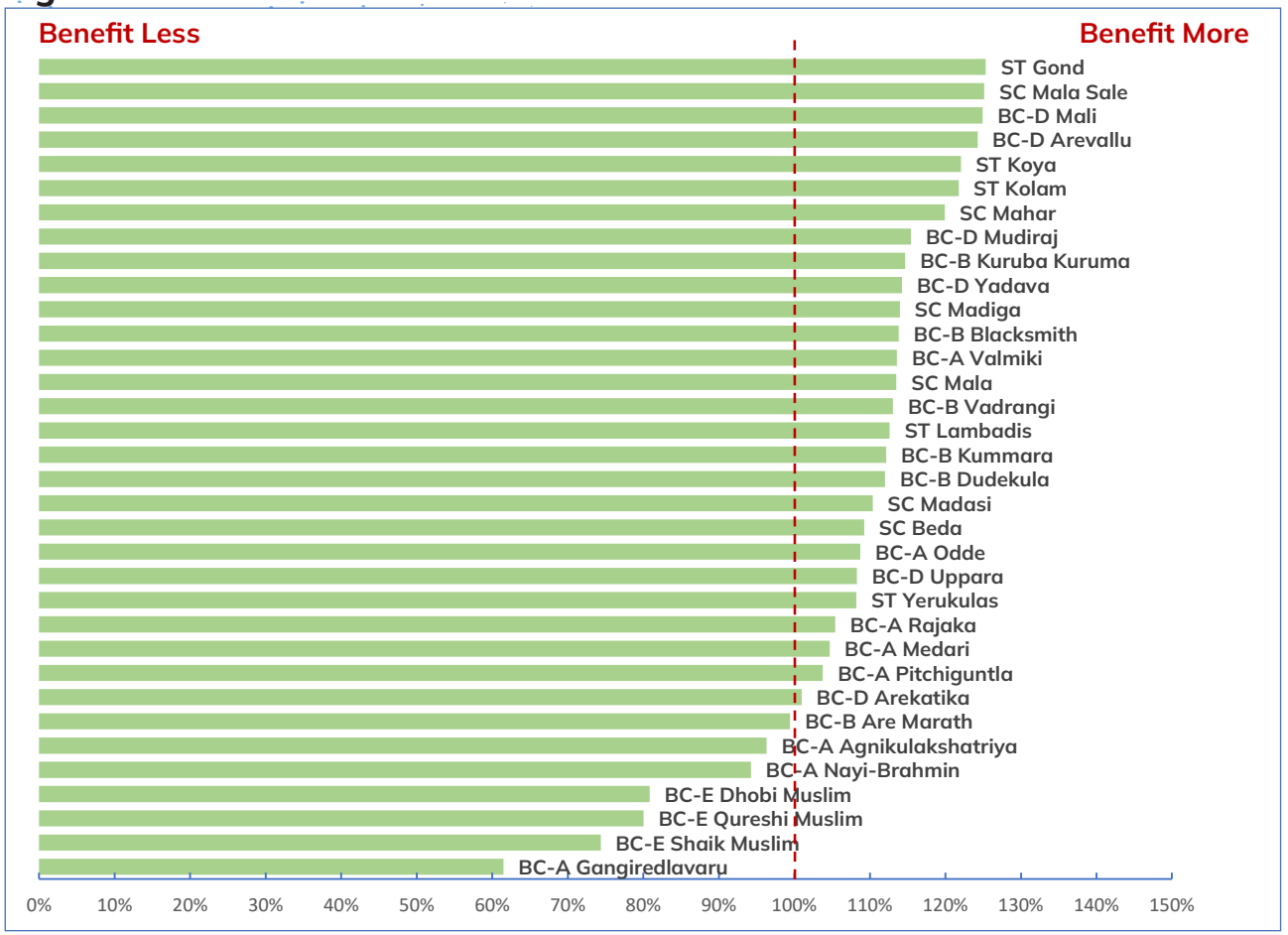


Figure 86: Govt. House

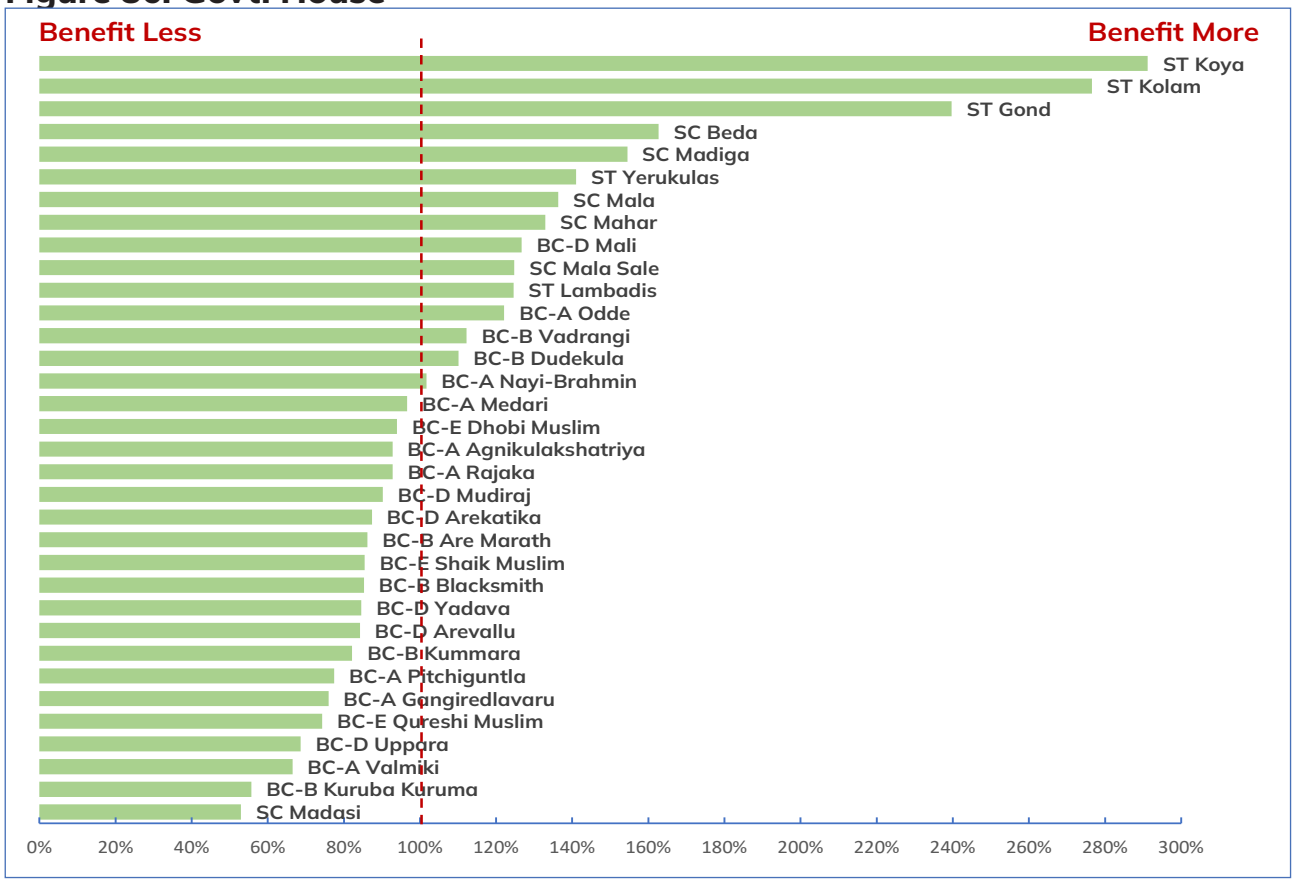
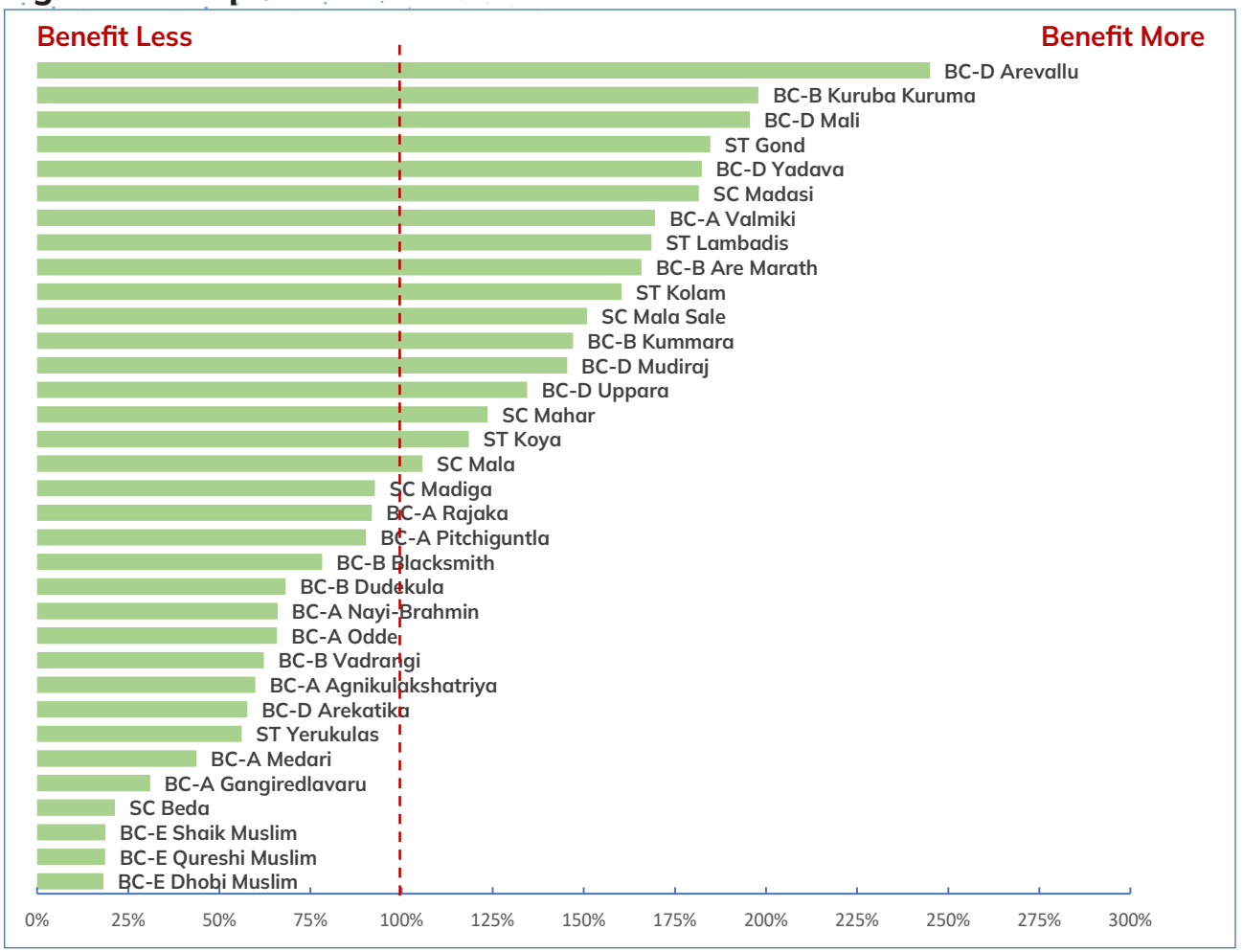


Figure 87: Crop Loan Waiver



APPENDIX 5: INTERPRETING CBI FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES (MEMBERS' NOTE)

Prof. Bhangya Bhukya
Member, Independent Expert Working Group
Telangana 2024 SEEEPC Survey

Telangana has historically been a land of Adivasis and pastoral communities, as it is largely covered by hills and forests. These communities began their civilizations in the Godavari and Krishna river valleys, with some migrating from plains settled by peasant societies. Over time, they developed distinct languages, cultures, and belief systems. The Government of India has recognized 32 communities in Telangana as Scheduled Tribes (STs). According to the SEEEPC survey, they constitute 10.5% (37,05,929) of the state's total population. Among them, the Lambadis, Koya, Gond, Yerukulas, and Kolam are numerically dominant, making up 94% of the total ST population. The Lambadis alone constitute 64.9% (24,02,836). Some of the remaining communities are very small, with populations of less than a thousand.

STs in the state can broadly be classified as forest and plain communities. Within the forest category, groups such as the Chenchu, Thoti, and Kondareddi are designated as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). The Gonds, Koyas, and their subgroups (Kolam, Pardhan, Naikpod, Konda Dhoras, and Kondareddis) are culturally Dravidian and are spread throughout Central and Deccan India. They are divided into several subgroups with different names but collectively identify as Koitur. They speak Kui, though in varying dialects. These communities are mainly concentrated in northern Telangana, especially in the Godavari River basin—Khammam, Warangal, and Adilabad districts. While the Gonds and Koyas have largely transitioned to agriculture, their subgroups still depend on forest produce, hunting, and other traditional occupations. The Chenchus, one of the oldest Dravidian communities, are found in the Krishna basin in Mahbubnagar district. They are considered racially close to the Veddas, an indigenous group from Sri Lanka, and speak a Dravidian language. Traditionally reliant on forest produce

and hunting, Chenchus have been pushed towards agriculture and wage labor after their forest habitats were declared tiger reserves. Most forest communities are now covered under the four Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) of Utnoor, Eturnagaram, Bhadrachalam, and Srisailam, located in the Scheduled Areas of the state.

The Lambadis (also known as Sugalis or Banjaras), Yerukulas, and Yenadis are historically pastoral nomadic communities, mostly settled in the plains. Yerukulas and Yenadis have traditionally engaged in pig-rearing, fishing, and mat- and basket-making. In contrast, the Lambadis migrated from northwestern India to the Deccan as caravan traders and transporters for the Sultanate and Mughal armies. They later served the armies of Deccan rulers and European colonial powers as grain suppliers and luggage carriers. Known by various names depending on their trade, they refer to themselves as Gor (cattle raisers). Today, they are found in nearly every district of Telangana, living in thandas (hamlets) on forest and wasteland fringes, often isolated from mainstream village society. Their language, Gor-Boli, is an Indo-Aryan language closely related to Rajasthani but influenced by Gujarati and Marathi. After losing their trading roles with the British colonial army in the mid-19th century, many Lambadis took up agriculture; some continued cattle-rearing into the 20th century. All three communities were classified as Criminal Tribes under colonial rule and later as De-Notified Tribes post-Independence in 1952. They were included in the Scheduled Tribes list in 1976 in Telangana, although they had already been in the ST category in the Andhra region since the 1950s.

It is essential to interpret the findings of the SEEEPC survey in the historical context of these communities. The survey suggests that STs are relatively less backward than their SC counterparts in the state. This may be because STs generally possess some land and have historically lived outside the direct oppression of dominant castes. In contrast, SCs have been systematically denied land rights and subjected to exploitation by the caste-based social order.

Among the STs, Bagatas are the least backward (CBI-69), followed by Hill and Kondareddis. Nakkalas (CBI-112) are the most backward, followed by Chenchus (CBI-108). These rankings likely reflect landholding patterns more than material culture. Bagatas and Kondareddis, being agriculturists, have not been heavily impacted by forest policies and development-induced displacement. On the other hand, semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers like Nakkalas and Chenchus have been evicted from their traditional habitats and reduced to agricultural laborers.

Among the five dominant STs, Kolams (CBI-92) are the least backward, followed by Koyas (CBI-92), Gonds (CBI-94), Lambadis (CBI-95), and Yerukalas (CBI-104). This pattern again shows that STs living in plains, like the Yerukalas and Lambadis, are more vulnerable due to their exposure to dominant caste society and lack of targeted development programs. In contrast, forest-dwelling STs fare slightly better due to the relative protection of ITDA programs and limited exposure to external exploitation.

Three significant findings emerged in the domains of landholding, education, and inter-caste marriages. STs in Telangana possess more land than many Backward Castes and Scheduled Castes, especially SCs, who are nearly landless. Nearly every ST family owns some land, though most holdings are under five acres and are unirrigated dry lands. Among the five dominant STs, Koyas own the highest percentage of land, followed by Gonds, Kolams, Lambadis, and Yerukalas. Once again, land ownership is lower among plains STs, as their lands lack legal protection and may have been transferred to dominant castes. However, landholding has not led to significant socio-economic development.

STs show high educational backwardness. They lead in school dropout rates and have the lowest percentages of children attending private or English-medium schools. Among the dominant STs, Lambadis perform the best educationally, followed by Kolams, Yerukalas, Gonds, and Koyas. The relatively better performance of plain STs may be due to their greater exposure to mainstream society and its educational norms. Lambadis and Yerukalas also have a higher presence in private sector jobs and improved living conditions.

A striking finding is the lowest percentage of inter-caste marriages among STs in the state, especially when compared to SCs and many BCs, although STs rank slightly higher in the CBI. STs are traditionally perceived as conservative communities. Among the five dominant tribes, the Kolams (a PVTG) have the lowest rate of inter-caste marriages, followed by the Gonds, Lambadis,Koyas, and Yerukalas. This pattern aligns with broader state trends: the greater the backwardness, the lower the incidence of inter-caste marriages. The relatively higher rate among the Yerukalas and Lambadis can be attributed to their greater exposure to mainstream caste society. In contrast, the situation is markedly different for forest-dwelling tribes.

Historically, marriages occurred between sub-groups within ST communities (e.g., Gond-Kolam), which are now classified as inter-caste. Post-Independence, many non-STs have married ST women to gain legal access to land in Scheduled Areas, exploiting provisions under the 1/70 Act, which bans land transfers from

STs to non-STs. In many such cases, the ST woman becomes the second wife, with the non-ST husband controlling the land. Among Koyas, inter-community/ caste marriages invite fines (thappu), which are used for community purposes. Because STs are not considered "untouchable," non-STs often have fewer social reservations about marrying them. This trend is more visible among educated sections, particularly among the Lambadis. The survey also shows that STs face less discrimination in religious places.

Overall, despite considerable state support through welfare schemes, STs in Telangana remain at the bottom of most development indicators. In terms of living conditions backwardness, the Koyas rank first and Gonds second in the state. A majority continue to work as wage laborers and agricultural labor, reflecting their persistent vulnerability and marginalization

APPENDIX 6: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (MEMBERS' NOTE)

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Telangana 2024 SEEEPC Survey

The SEEEPC Survey provides a momentous opportunity to craft a comprehensive development model that can transform Telangana into a socially, politically, economically equitable, and environmentally sustainable state. This goal is not new. It has inspired our leaders since India's independence.

Climate change and environmental degradation pose the most significant challenges to achieving an equitable society today, as they disproportionately affect the poor and disadvantaged. Indira Gandhi, sagacious as she was, realised this much ahead of her time. For her, development and ecology weren't a zero-sum game; they were two sides of a coin that, when balanced, could forge a sustainable future. No wonder Indira Gandhi enacted the Wild Life Protection Act, The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution)

Act and the Forest Conservation Act, which laid the policy foundation for protecting India's environment. While the Rajiv Gandhi government expanded on Indira Gandhi's vision by enacting the Environment (Protection) Act and establishing the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1985, the UPA government sharpened environmental protection enforcement by establishing Green Tribunals.

Given the consensus on equity as the ultimate goal and environmentally sustainable development as the means to achieve it, I suggest the committee take a two-pronged approach. First, use the SEEEPC Survey and other available statistical datasets to gain necessary insights. Next, formulate a sustainable development model for Telangana that can become an example and be replicated across India.

Insights Needed

1. The percentage of people under the poverty line across the state.
2. The percentage of people living under the poverty line in each local body. Government data shows enormous variation in per capita incomes and poverty levels by location. Multiple studies and anecdotal evidence indicate that poverty levels broadly correlate to the size and location of population clusters. While remote and small rural communities tend to be poorer, large towns and cities support higher income levels with embedded clusters of poverty in Bastees and migrant labour townships/camps. Hence, we need to tabulate poverty levels by population clusters —a meaningful and actionable cluster would be the jurisdiction of various local bodies (e.g., Panchayats, Municipalities, and Corporations).
3. The percentage of people living under the poverty line in each environmentally degraded region/area mapped to local bodies. Environmental/ecological degradation negatively correlates with economic well being. Hence, we need to correlate poverty data from the present survey with data collected from other studies on environmental degradation. To be actionable, the areas/regions impacted by ecological degradation and their poverty levels should be mapped to Local Body jurisdictions.

Modelling Sustainable Development

1. Poverty alleviation efforts should be a significant focus, with efforts tailored to population clusters, that is, local body jurisdictions.
2. Poverty alleviation efforts must be tailored to specific communities and their social, economic, and ecological environments. A top-down state-level approach will be suboptimal since there are 13,000 plus such local communities (local bodies) with massive diversity. Thus, any plans or schemes devised should be centred around individual population agglomerations represented by local bodies.
3. Environmental ecosystem restoration has to be part of poverty alleviation programs, as ecological degradation makes poverty alleviation and broad-ranging economic prosperity challenging.
4. Equity is better achieved through inclusivity and ownership. Any development or poverty alleviation program should involve local communities in decision making. Decentralising power to local bodies is the best way to accomplish this. It is to be noted that the model followed by the earlier government

in Telangana doubly deprived local communities. They excluded local communities from exploiting and benefiting from community natural resources (land, sand, minerals, etc.) while favouring outside contractors in developmental projects like Mission Kakatiya and Bhagiratha.

5. To be meaningful, empowering local bodies should include control over natural resources like land usage, water body usage, controlled exploitation of natural produce and even services like health and education.

6. Empowering local bodies and decentralising decision making and financial power not only ensures better poverty alleviation and developmental programme outcomes but, more importantly, given the large number of such local bodies in the state coupled with reservations in these bodies, it also results in political, social, and economic equity - true Praja Palana.

7. Gender equity should permeate all initiatives.

APPENDIX 7:

STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY TO DETERMINE SIGNIFICANCE OF PARAMETERS

- Each of the responses to the questions in the SEEEPC survey were coded as parameters.
- The values for each parameter were then grouped by caste for each of the 242 castes and No Caste and Others.
- For each parameter, across the 242 caste groups, the following were computed:
  i. Average (μ)
  ii. Standard deviation (σ)
  iii. Highest (maximum) & Lowest (minimum)
  iv. Top quartile and Bottom quartile
- Compute three disparity metrics for each parameter:
  i. Coefficient of variation (CV): σ/μ (Overall spread relative to the mean)
  ii. Relative range: (max – min)/μ (Extreme gap between best-off and worst-off groups)
  iii. Quartile ratio: Top quartile/Bottom quartile (Skew between the top and bottom 25 %)
- Standardise: Convert each metric to a z-score so they are on the same scale:

  z = (value – μ across all)/(σ across all)

- Compute significance of each parameter

  Significance = 1/3 * (CVz +REL RANGEz + QUARTILE RATIOz)

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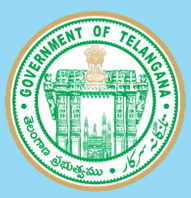

Government of Telangana