

Press Release

RAPID SURVEY OF HOUSEHOLDS[[1]](#footnote-1) (AHMEDABAD)

(April 10th to 22nd, 2020)

We report results from an ongoing survey conducted to assess the needs and circumstances of low-income households in Ahmedabad by volunteers at IIMA. The insights reported here are drawn from conversations with around 110[[2]](#footnote-2) households between April 10th to 22nd, 2020. This is an update from surveys conducted with over 500 households between March 24th to April 9th 2020, results from which are available here (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13f_hX_FwUln0B9NOyf5s5LMrPIKfulry/view>)

We also draw from calls received by volunteers from distressed households other than those directly surveyed. As the number of surveys conducted increased, phone numbers of certain volunteers were circulated among the neighbors, relatives, friends, etc. by the respondents. Volunteers have been answering 50+ calls daily, especially since the lockdown was extended.

**Primary Occupation/Major income source of households**

Bus/van/auto drivers, daily wage workers, plumbers, rickshaw pullers, vegetable sellers, etc.

**Income:**

**Similar to what was reported earlier, around 76% households reported not earning regular incomes anymore (most have lost or will lose their entire income) (N=110)**

* Households continue reporting not having the means to procure basics like ration, milk, vegetables, toiletries etc. Anxiety is expressed about the future incomes, and their ability to pay rent, telephone and electricity bills, etc. by a majority of households
* Many households have taken credit/loans to meet basic expenses

**Availability of Food:**

**60% of respondents said that their current food supply would last them less than a week’s supply of food. This is a sharp rise from the 44% reported for the first two weeks of the lockdown.**

**Other respondents reported the following[[3]](#footnote-3):**

● 1-2 weeks: 14%

● 2-4 weeks: 13%

Some quotes from the calls

*“before we used to have 3 meals per day now it is 2, and kids are not having milk like before”*

*“reduced to two meals from three”*

*“eat only once a day”*

*“eat twice a day now”*

*“only surviving on khichdi given by neighbours or family members in the area”*

*“We’re 6-7 family members, getting only one meal properly in the day”*

**Many households claimed to have reduced their daily food intake-- reducing the number of meals, quantity of food per meal, not being able to give milk to young children, etc.**

● More than a month/”sufficient”/ ambiguous responses: 12%

(N=98)

**Access to Public Distribution System:**

Only 53% of surveyed households said they had collected the ration for the month, even though over 80% claimed to have a ration card for the place they were currently residing in (N=110). This is slightly lower than the 56% reported for the first two months.

*Among those who had ration cards, the following were the reasons why they were unable to access:*

* Ration shops in their vicinity were shut, had low supply of grains, or were overcrowded (10+ cases). Many were told to come at a later date (after a few days or week and as late as May 4th)
  + *“visited the shop thrice but to no avail”*
  + *“Ration got over when visited”*
  + *“Ration card is not particularly useful at the moment due to the lack of supply”*
  + *“Lots of rush and sometimes supply of ration not available at the locations. They send us back again and again”*
* Despite the announcement that APL cards without NFSA stamp (“sikka”) would be permitted to get ration (starting 13 April 2020), over 10 households reported that they were still being denied ration because of that
* For the others, they either did not have a card for the place they were currently residing in, had lost their ration card/had only a photocopy, or the card was in someone else’s name in the who’s now immobile and/or can’t visit physically
* Few households also claimed to have received less than promised quantity
  + *“have to stand under the sun for 3 hours to collect 2 kgs of ration which is not feasible for my children”*
  + *“Got 5kg rice, gehu, 1kg sugar all over now”*

**Cash Transfer**

* Around 46% reported having a Jandhan account (N=96)
* Among those who had an account, around 50% reported being aware of money transfers from the government to their accounts. Although low, this number is significantly higher than that we had found in the first two weeks.

**Other assistance**

* Around 54% households had at least one child going to anganwadi/govt schools (N=79)
* Among those attending, only 34% claimed to have received any food assistance from an anganwadi, compared to 20% in the previous two weeks
* Around 40% sought information regarding symptoms, precautions and helplines from

surveyors (and it was provided to them immediately). This is twice than what the previous round had indicated. (N=390)

* Community kitchens that we are in touch with, which were serving 1500-2000 people initially are now facing demands of serving 3000-5000 people. While initially it was predominantly migrant workers in the industrial areas who were coming out for assistance, now families who permanently live in these areas and relied on daily incomes have started coming asking for food
* While some of these were supported initially by local industries when community organisations running them approached them, the support has largely stopped becuase of "no business"

**Additional issues needing attention:**

Our volunteers have received calls where the callers have reported not being able to access food specifically because of their caste. In one case, the caller identified their caste as "Devi Pujak" (listed under the erstwhile Criminal Tribes Act) commonly known as Vaghris in Gujarat and reported that there are only 11 houses and 6 houses (belonging to their caste) in the area they live in. As told by the respondent people who live in front are not letting the distributors reach them. One of them asked us to come to the nearby BRTS bus station for them to be able to come to collect the ration. The other cycled (must have been around 7 km) to the kirana store (we were purchasing grains from) to collect the ration.

**Suggestions[[4]](#footnote-4)**

**Provision of Food & Rations**

● More community kitchens should be immediately as the need goes beyond migrant workers. These workers were primarily reliant on street vendors who are no longer on the street. Further, they are largely caught in small workspaces, which also serve as their living spaces. They neither have the means for cooking nor the space.

● Network of Self-Help Groups should be tapped to manage and run these community kitchens (A good example of this has been the Kudumbashree model followed in Kerala).

● Workers should be brought to temporary shelters like schools or community halls, with adequate space to maintain social distancing. These can also serve as distribution points for assistance, meeting of health and sanitation needs.

● In the absence of temporary shelters, a distribution mechanism needs to be established to reach these workers in cooperation with the local police and other frontline workers.

**Access to Ration**

● Migrant workers should be allowed to prove their identity through any means available to them to access government schemes and there should be no requirement for only specific means of identity.

● The option of using only indelible ink markers without any requirements for id cards to distribute rations to anyone in need should be actively considered. As has been pointed out, there is no shortage of food grains right now: https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/coronavirus-lockdown-food-for-

Poor-migrants-mass-exodus-jean-dreze-6353790

● The distribution of food by CSOs is commendable, but also needs supervision and management to ensure that it is reaching those in need and is of reasonable quality.

**Regarding Ann Brahm Yojana**

* Uniform communication to the public and vendors to avoid confusion
* Clear guideline should be circulated on the identification of the beneficiaries, benefit, registration/application process and the process of availing benefit
* Information on address and contact details of the places where the forms are available should be made public.

1. This note has been prepared by Prof Ankur Sarin along with a team of researchers, at IIM Ahmedabad and does not necessarily reflect the views of the institute. Volunteers have been reaching out to vulnerable households# associated with community outreach programs of IIMA to assess their needs and circumstances during lockdown, and provide them with assistance. More details can be found at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/13f_hX_FwUln0B9NOyf5s5LMrPIKfulry/view> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Not all the questions could be asked to all the households, therefore the sample size varies in some cases. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Households are being called randomly/ in no predetermined order and the occupations of surveyed households in both the survey periods are similar. It is also indicated by a similar share of households having at least one child attending government schools or anganwadis (around 50% in both rounds).Therefore, we have no reason to believe that households surveyed later are substantively different from those interviewed earlier. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. We reiterate some of the suggestions that we made in the earlier note [↑](#footnote-ref-4)