

Press Release

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

(April 23rd to MAY 2nd, 2020)

We report results from an ongoing survey (starting March 24th 2020) conducted to assess the needs and circumstances of low-income households in Ahmedabad by volunteers at IIMA.

The insights reported in this particular brief are drawn from conversations with around 130[[2]](#footnote-2) households between April 23rd to May 2nd, 2020. This is an update from surveys conducted with over 600 households from March 24th to April 22nd 2020.

The monthly income of 90% of the households in our survey is less than the median income (Rs.19,500) of a representative sample of urban Ahmedabad[[3]](#footnote-3).

This indicates: (a) The households reached out to in the survey are more disadvantaged than a representative sample of urban Ahmedabad. (b) Given their incomes, the status of these households is indicative of the likely situation being faced by at least half of the over 6 million population residing in Ahmedabad who are also of similar income profile.

We also continue to 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 continue to answer 50+ calls daily.

The reports for the previous surveys can be found here[[4]](#footnote-4):

1. Survey of around 110 households surveyed conducted between April 10th to 22nd 2020: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11rNpS1VoyPSd447d2nyYLyUzi_FX3t-z/view>
2. Survey of around 500 households conducted between March 24th to April 9th 2020: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/13f_hX_FwUln0B9NOyf5s5LMrPIKfulry/view>

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

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

**Income:**

**Around 85% households reported not earning regular incomes anymore (most have lost or will lose their entire income) (N=123).**

* Most households have lost their monthly incomes (in the range of Rs.10000 to Rs.15000 for a large section) and expressed anxiety about their ability to pay rent, school fees, telephone and electricity bills, etc.
* Households continue reporting not having the means to procure basics like ration, milk, vegetables, toiletries etc. and

MORESome quotes from the calls

*“Eating one meal and skipping the other.”dd*

*“1 time khaate hain”*

*“From 3 meals a day to once a day”*

*“Only eat in the afternoon.”*

*“eating just 1 time day”*

*“Portion size reduced and eating only twice a day instead of three.”*

*“Meal portions have reduced”*

**We continued to find households reporting reduction in their daily food intake-- reducing the number of meals (54% of households), quantity of food per meal, not giving milk to children, etc.**

*“Main akela nahi hu sahab, meri poori line mein sabko madad chahiye... aap kis kis ko madad de paoge.. Company mein phone kiye the, koi nahi uthaya.. wahan se umeed tha ke madad kar denge”*

*“I am stuck at my village and my family is in Ahmedabad. I cannot go back and support them.”*

**Availability of Food:**

**Around 54% respondents said that the number of meals their families were consuming per day have reduced since the lockdown.**

**Around 60% of respondents said that their current food supply would last them less than a week’s supply of food** (N=119)**.**

**Other respondents reported the following[[5]](#footnote-5):**

● 1-2 weeks: 20%

● 2-4 weeks: 8%

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

*“Food supply is there but all is being purchased through credit. So as long as people lend, we will survive”*

*“Managing from neighbours”*

**Access to Public Distribution System:**

Only 64% of surveyed households said they had collected the ration for the month, even though over 85% claimed to have a ration card for the place they were currently residing in (N=122).

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.
  + *“they denied for second time “*
  + *“Asked to come after 15th May”*
  + *“Ration shop owner has asked to come after 2-3 days to collect the food supply “*
  + *“The ration shop owner has denied to provide with the food supply, since the shop itself hasn't received adequate food supply “*
* As reported, earlier, 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 claimed to have received less than promised quantity, like found in previous rounds.
  + *“one day we received only 3Kg dal, 1Kg chawal and some oil and nothing after that.”*

**Cash Transfer**

* Around 46% reported having a Jandhan account (N=117)

* Among those who had an account, around 50% reported being aware of money transfers from the government to their accounts.

**Other assistance**

* Around 67% households had at least one child going to anganwadi/govt schools (N=121). Among those attending, only 20% claimed to have received any food assistance from an anganwadi.
* Around 30% sought information regarding symptoms, precautions and helplines from

surveyors (and it was provided to them immediately) (N=120)

**Challenges in Getting Relief to Families**

* When offered financial help, many households, even though in dire need, were rightly hesitant and anxious about providing the surveyors with their bank details as they feared fraudulent activities
* Most households who required assistance did not have digital wallets like Google Pay, Paytm, BHIM or Phone Pe making immediate transferring of funds difficult
* Many households (especially living containment zones/ severely affected areas) were not sure if they would be able to procure food even after receiving a financial transfer as they claimed most shops in their vicinity were shut or the police were not letting them move around in the area

**Suggestions[[6]](#footnote-6)**

1. An independent forum that would monitor and address grievances with implementation should be urgently put in place.
2. Government should create a nodal authority to coordinate with NGOs or VAs. This should be done with purpose of expanding and complement the reach and effectiveness, of organisations that have been trying to work on the ground.
3. For the task of coordination, both state level as well as ward level (for urban) and block level (for rural) nodal committees should be created since this time the distress is not only widespread but also with very local specific attributes.

**Specific to Provision of Food & Rations**

* Milk should be provided to young children belonging to vulnerable families. At least children attending anganwadis and primary schools can be targeted for milk distribution which can be carried out through workers or teachers that are already engaged in Covid related activities.
* The government can also partner with Amul to allow households to collect milk directly for free (or at least at a subsidised rate). Households can collect this milk from local Amul parlours by providing relevant government school or anganwadi related identification details of their child.
* The government should create ward and zone level teams that include Municipal Councillors along with Assistant and Deputy Municipal Commissioners, Police and other local administrators familiar with the respective wards and zones along and task them essential responsibilities of supervising food and medicine distribution/home deliveries, and getting medical care where required.
* For migrant workers, small community kitchens managed and run by them can be organised, with rations and raw material provided by the government. This would allow them to cook according to their preferences and keep people self sufficient in smaller clusters.

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. For more details on household monthly income distribution of Ahmedabad, please see page 9 of this paper:

   *Ahmedabad More but Different Government for “Slum Free” and Livable Cities*; Policy Research Working Paper, The World Bank, 2012; available here: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/526341468267004528/pdf/wps6267.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Owing to limited resources and the primary goal of providing assistance (in the form of information and/or financial support) to the most vulnerable, we utilised info available on education levels and incomes gathered in the previous survey to reach out to households more efficiently in this survey round. We selected education and income from a host of available social and economic indicators as they were found to be good statistical predictors of households that would not be earning regular incomes and/or lack adequate food supply, and ergo, more likely to require assistance from us.

   Hence, these numbers reported may also not be statistically comparable to the numbers reported in the earlier reports as the households covered in this round were slightly more disadvantaged than earlier. This is indicated by the higher share of households having a child attending a government school/anganwadi—67% in this round compared to around 50% reported in earlier rounds. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. We reiterate some of the suggestions that we made in the earlier note [↑](#footnote-ref-6)