

PRESS RELEASE

Azim Premji University COVID-19 Livelihoods Survey: Stories behind the numbers Voices from Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha

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Azim Premji University, in collaboration with civil society organisations, conducted phone surveys of 5000 workers across 12 states of India, to gauge the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on employment, livelihoods, and access to government relief schemes. Survey data as well as details, including organisations involved, are available on [our website](#). State-wise survey data is available [here](#).

In this webinar, we will present the findings of our survey for the states of **Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha**. We will hear from our collaborators in these states to understand what these findings mean in the context of the metros and villages that they work in.

Please join us on [You Tube Live](#)

COVID-19 and its associated safety measures, such as the lockdown since March 24th have taken a heavy toll on the economy, and particularly on vulnerable informal and migrant workers and their families. **Immediate as well as medium to long term, comprehensive policy measures are needed to counter these effects and chart the path to economic recovery.** We hope that the survey findings will help in determining the extent and nature of policy interventions that are needed.

We measured levels of employment and earnings since the lockdown was imposed, and compared them to the situation prevailing in February. We covered self-employed, casual, and regular wage/salaried workers. We will soon be releasing a detailed report of these findings.

The sample for the survey was selected using the networks of our civil society organisation collaborators. The findings pertain only to the sample and are not representative of the entire state. Findings should not be compared across states.

Key Findings of the survey

Bihar (Rural, 173 respondents)

- **Nearly half (46%) of all respondents lost employment.** Casual wage workers were more severely affected, **eight in ten casual workers lost jobs.**
- **More women (55%) lost employment** compared to men (35%).
- **More SC/ST workers (58%) lost employment** compared to OBC workers (35%).
- **Nearly seven in ten households had to reduce their food intake** during the lockdown.
- SC/ST households worst affected in terms of food intake, **85% of SC/ST households were consuming less food than before.**
- Nearly two in ten vulnerable households did not receive rations.
- **More than half (56%) of vulnerable households did not receive Jan Dhan cash transfer.**
- **Four in ten vulnerable households did not receive any cash transfer.**

Jharkhand (Rural, 458 respondents)

- **Nearly six in ten (58%) respondents lost their employment.** Casual wage workers more severely affected, 76% reporting loss of employment.
- **Nine in ten farmers (89%) were not able to harvest or sell their produce at full price.**
- **Four in ten salaried workers (42%) were not paid salaries or faced a reduction in salary** during the lockdown.
- For non-agricultural self-employed workers and wage workers, who were still employed, **average weekly earnings fell by 2/3rd (65%).**
- **Nearly eight in ten (77%) households reported reducing their food intake during the lockdown.** Casual wage workers more severely affected with nine in ten (93%) casual wage workers reporting reduced food intake.
- **Two in ten households did not receive ration** during the lockdown.
- **Six in ten vulnerable households did not receive Jan Dhan cash transfer.**
- More than half (54%) vulnerable households did not receive any cash transfer.

Odisha (503 respondents)

- **Two-third (67%) respondents reported losing their employment. Urban self-employed worst-hit** with nearly all of them (96%) losing their employment.
- **Earnings of casual wage workers and non-agricultural self-employed** who retained their employment **fell by 80%.**
- Nine in ten farmers were unable to harvest or sell their produce at full price.
- **Eight in ten households reported consuming less food** during the lockdown than before. Urban households and migrants more severely affected with nine in ten reporting reduction in food intake.
- **Nearly nine in ten households received rations.**
- **Seven in ten vulnerable households did not receive Jan Dhan cash transfer.**
- A quarter of vulnerable households did not receive any cash transfer.

Madhya Pradesh (Rural, 525 respondents)

- **Almost half of the respondents (48%) lost employment** during the lockdown, **worst-hit were casual workers**, with 65% losing their jobs.
- **More than seven in ten farmers were unable to harvest or sell their produce at full price.**
- One-fourth of households did not have money to buy even a week's worth of essentials, SC/ST households were more constrained, compared to OBC and General category households.
- **Seven in ten households were consuming less food than before** during the lockdown.
- **45% of all vulnerable households did not receive Jan Dhan cash transfer.**
- **Nearly four out of ten (36%) vulnerable households did not receive any cash transfer**

In summary, the disruption in the economy and labour markets in these states is enormous. Livelihoods have been devastated at unprecedented levels during the lockdown. The recovery from this could be slow and very painful.

As a response to the findings of this survey, the team which has conducted the study, suggests the following measures to ameliorate the conditions of those most affected by the crisis:

- Universalisation of the PDS to expand its reach and implementation of expanded rations for at least the next six months.

- Cash transfers equal to at least Rs. [7000 per month for two months](#). From a macroeconomic perspective as well, larger transfers are needed to bring back demand in the economy.

- Proactive steps like the [expansion of MGNREGA](#), introduction of [urban employment guarantee](#), and investment in [universal basic services](#) are needed.