



LIFE LOCKDOWN

**A SURVEY OF INDIA'S
URBAN YOUTH**

AASTHA KAUL • TERRI CHAPMAN

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About Youth Ki Awaaz

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Youth Ki Awaaz (YKA) is India's largest, crowdsourced media platform that engages young people on key social justice issues at scale. The Youth Ki Awaaz community represents young India's voice on critical issues shaping our world. With over 95,000 young citizen writers spread across all Indian states, and 3.5 million monthly readers, YKA enables young people to address and engage on important social justice issues that matter to them, through powerful storytelling and media creation. With the objective of moving the audience from 'information to action', and creating the deepest level of youth engagement, YKA also actively partners with organisations such as UNICEF, UNDP, Save the Children, Twitter, ORF, among others, to conceptualise, develop and create high-impact campaigns, movements, surveys, and projects.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As India emerges from its nationwide lockdown, it finds itself in uncharted territory, with the pandemic fundamentally altering the way people work, communicate, and lead their daily lives. Perhaps the most affected cohort is the young population, who represent 65 percent of India's 1.3 billion people.¹

This study aims to shed light on the perceptions and experiences of India's urban youth of the lockdown. The report outlines findings from a survey of 4,599 youth in India between 18 and 32 years, living in the country's largest cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, and Hyderabad. Data was collected through an online survey over a period of three weeks from April 8 to 27, 2020. Respondents were asked about the impacts of the lockdown on their schooling, work, their access to

social protections, and their mental well-being, as well as their assessment of the government's ability to respond to the crisis.

The sample was largely female (73 percent) and mostly employed (70 percent). Out of the 4,599 respondents, 71 percent are living with their families. Because of the nature of the survey being online, this study makes an assumption that they all have some degree of internet connectivity and access to a device.

As the lockdown closed all non-essential business, the impacts on the economy and labour market have been significant. While some of the school-going and working populations have been able to shift their work and studies online, many are being left out. To begin with, 320 million students have been affected by school closures across the country.² Among this

survey's respondents, 31 percent report that their school has not made provisions for them to continue their studies during the lockdown. Among those who were previously employed before the lockdown, 25 percent say that they are sitting idle at home as their job does not allow them to work remotely. Even as the country begins to reopen, the impacts of the lockdown on learning and employment are likely to be long-lasting.

The pandemic itself and the measures taken to address it have created insecurity and uncertainty around the globe. The survey respondents report that the lockdown has led to emotional upheaval, with 65 percent of respondents saying that they have felt *lonely* or *very lonely* during the lockdown. Indeed, the impact on their mental health has been stark: 37 percent of the respondents feel that the lockdown has severely impacted their mental wellbeing. Further, as the respondents look to the future, 43 percent of them worry that they will no longer be able to lead a normal life after the lockdown.

The survey finds that few youth have basic social protections. Just 31 percent of the respondents who are employed, report having some sort of health insurance. At the same time, a majority of the respondents (66 percent) express a high degree of confidence that they would have

adequate access to healthcare if they needed it. Combined with the fact that most youth respondents (71 percent) are living with their families, this linkage demonstrates the state of social insurance in India, where the onus of protection falls on the family.

Respondents indicated a high level of trust in the government's ability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite the perceived hardships from the lockdown, an overwhelming majority (96 percent) are of the view that it was necessary. Furthermore, despite non-government news sources being the biggest source of pandemic-related information for the majority of respondents (80 percent), government messaging has prevailed, as 72 percent of respondents report that the state COVID-19 helpline would be their first tool if a household member starts exhibiting symptoms.

These findings do not fully represent the experiences of India's urban youth. What this report attempts to do is to uncover findings that may implicate India's youth in the coming years. The report seeks to offer directions for further research on the socio-economic impacts of the lockdown on the world's largest young population.



STAY HOME

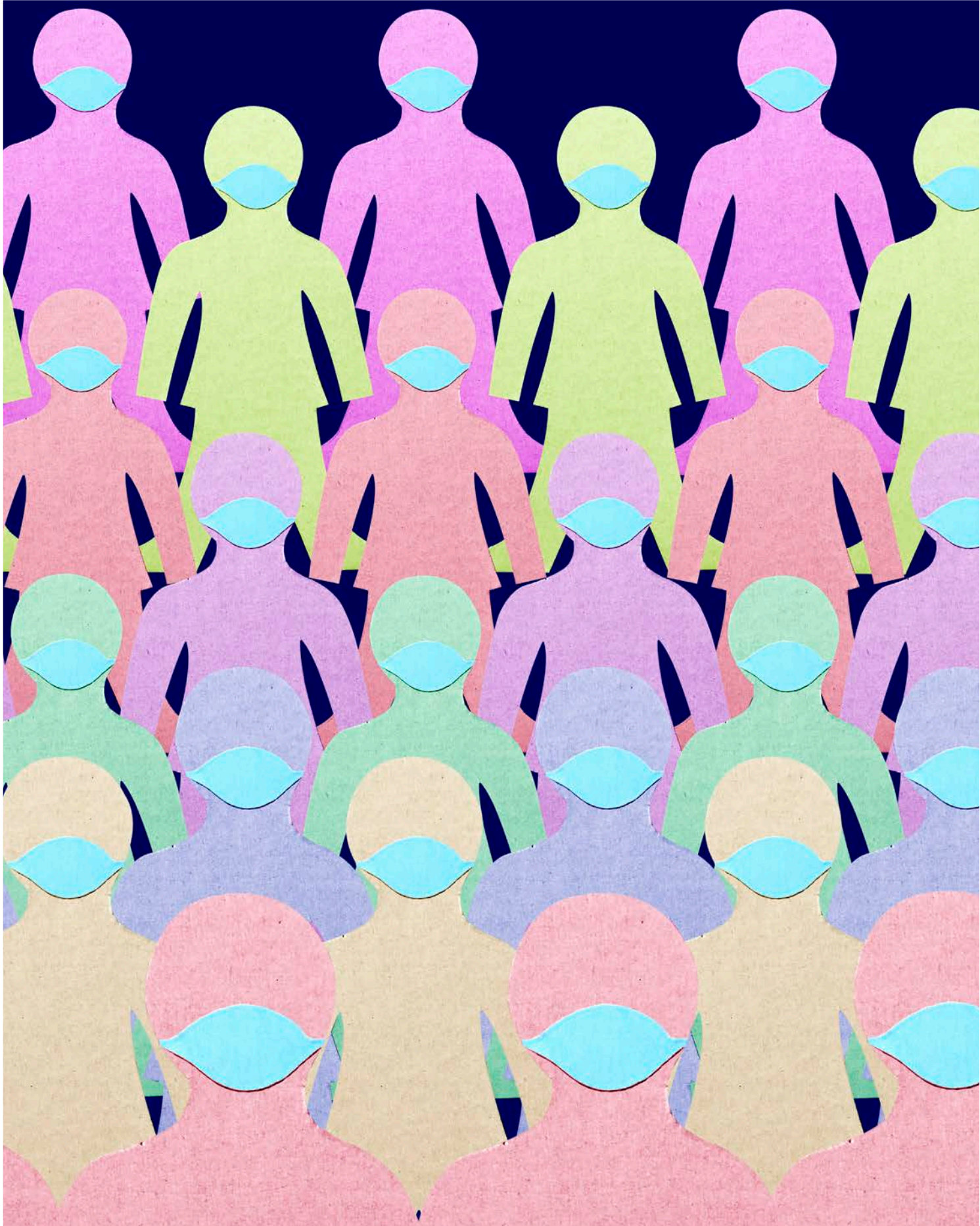
STAY SAFE

INTRODUCTION

The world came to a standstill as unprecedented lockdown measures closed cities, deserted streets and confined people to their homes. The strictest initial response came from India, which on 24 March brought the lives of over 1.3 billion people to a grinding halt under a nationwide lockdown. As India closed its schools and universities and suspended all non-essential business and travel, it was immediately clear that India's youth, who account for 65 percent of the population,³ would bear the brunt. India's young people find themselves in a state of extreme vulnerability as the future becomes more precarious and uncertain.

It is within this context that the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) conducted the *Youth Lockdown Survey*. The survey asked 4,599 urban youth between the ages of 18 and 32 about their perceptions and experiences of the lockdown. Data was collected online between April 8 to 27 from six of the largest cities in India: Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, and Hyderabad.

The rest of the report is structured as follows: Section 1 provides an overview of the methods. Section 2 discusses the impacts of the crisis and ensuing confinement measures on education, learning, work and employment. Section 3 analyses the current state of social protections situated in the context of the ongoing pandemic and impending economic recession. Section 4 highlights the impacts of the crisis, and the measures to contain it, on the mental health of India's urban youth. Section 5 presents findings related to trust in government, the availability of and sources of information, and youth views on what is needed most from the government. The report concludes with a brief summary of the key findings, highlighting lessons that may be useful for India as it continues to battle the ongoing crisis. The report is not meant to provide strict policy recommendations, or a representative assessment of the lockdown, but rather, to provide policy-relevant insights and analysis.



SECTION 1

METHODS

The *Youth Lockdown Survey* was designed to help understand the impacts of the lockdown on India's urban youth. The central areas of investigation include the following: 1) education and employment; 2) social protections and wellbeing; 3) mental health; and 4) governance and trust. Table 1 shows the key questions of the investigation.

The survey questionnaire was designed by ORF researchers. The anonymous online survey was comprised of closed questions. The survey tool used for administering the survey was provided by Youth Ki Awaaz (YKA). After the questionnaire

was developed and the survey was digitised, an internal pilot was conducted. Revisions were made to the questionnaire and remaining bugs were addressed in the online survey tool. The survey was disseminated on the website of YKA and ORF and promoted on social media platforms including Twitter and Facebook.

Data collection took place over three weeks from April 8 to 27, 2020. The survey was completed by 5,922 respondents between the ages of 18 and 32. For the purposes of this report, ORF restricted the sample to six of the largest cities in India—Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Chennai, and Hyderabad. The

total sample for these six cities was 4,599 complete responses. The majority (73 percent) of respondents were female, 25 percent male, less than one percent non-binary, less than one percent transgender, and two percent preferred not to share their gender identity.⁴ While the number of transgender and non-

binary respondents were too small to be robust, we have included them in the analysis. Our initial findings indicate that further studies on the impacts and implications on the lockdown on these groups should be further examined.

The survey was completed by 5,922 respondents between the ages of **18** and **32**

	QUESTIONS
Education and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are education institutions and employers providing support to students and employees? • How has the lockdown impacted respondent's education and work? • Have youth been able to continue learning and/or working from home during the lockdown? • Have respondents had to cut their hours of work, been forced to take unpaid leave, lost their jobs or had wage cuts?
Social Protections and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do India's urban youth have access to social protections such as unemployment insurance, paid sick leave or health insurance? • How do youth perceive the availability of health care right now? • Do youth feel that they have access to all the necessities that they need during the lockdown?
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are youth keeping themselves occupied during the lockdown? • How do youth feel their mental health has been impacted by the lockdown? • Do youth feel safe from physical and emotional harm while under lockdown? • Are youth engaging in new digital communities during the lockdown and if so what kind of communities? • What are respondents most worried about?
Governance and Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do youth assess the quality of available information about the coronavirus? • What sources of information are respondents relying on? • Do respondents trust the government in responding effectively to the ongoing crisis? • To what extent do youth view the lockdown as necessary? And are they following the lockdown guidelines? • What do India's urban youth think is needed most right now?

TABLE 1: KEY QUESTIONS

To be sure, a sample of 4,599 is not representative of urban youth in India. The data does however, reveal important insights that are worth exploring. India is geographically diverse, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been varied. The

sample was therefore designed to collect views from urban youth in Tier I cities across different geographies in India. Figure 1 shows the number of responses by location.

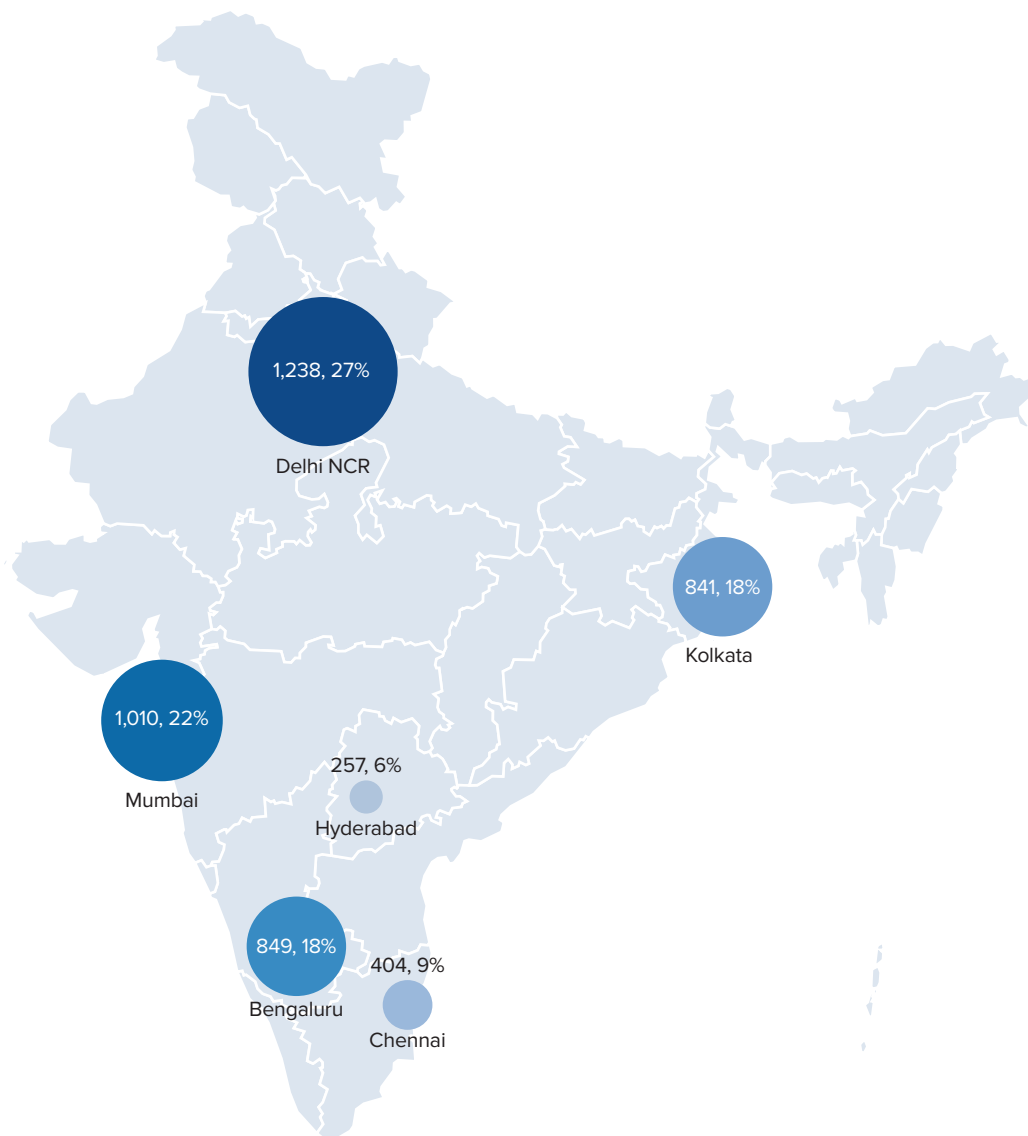


FIGURE 1: RESPONDENTS BY LOCATION (NUMBER, %)

The sample age bracket of 18-32 was selected because this age group is likely to face differentiated challenges in the context of the lockdown. The education and employment implications of the pandemic and the policy responses to it are of

interest for this study. This age group, especially those at the higher end, are facing a second major economic crisis in the beginning of their careers. Figure 2 illustrates the survey respondents by age group.

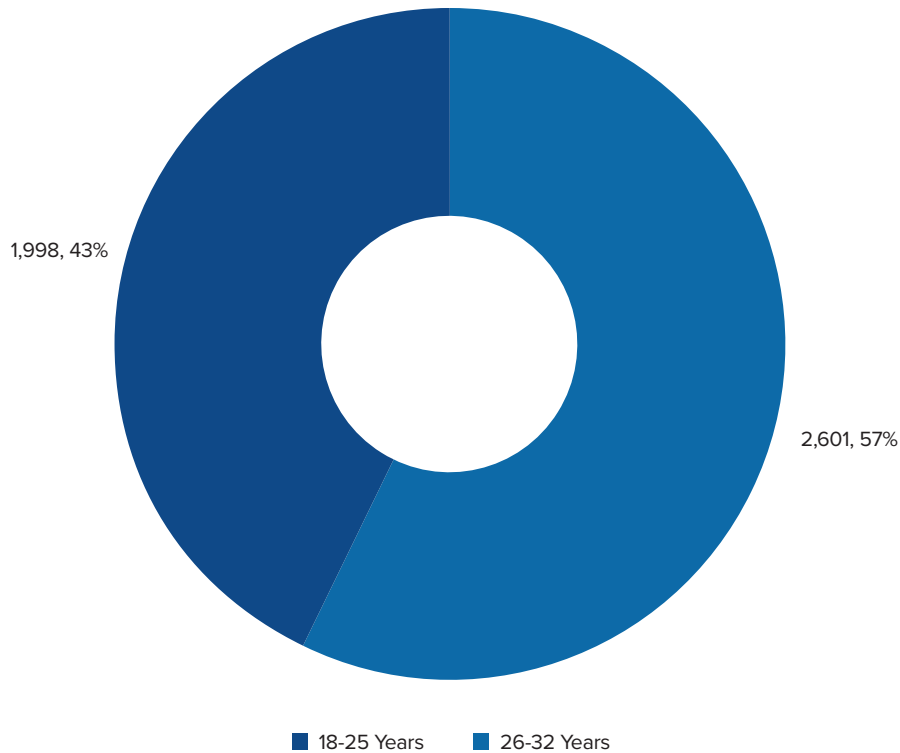


FIGURE 2: RESPONDENTS BY AGE (NUMBER, %)

The survey was administered online and promoted and shared primarily through social media platforms. There is a large gap in digital access by gender in India, with two-thirds of internet users being male.⁵ ORF and YKA used targeted social media promotions

and tactics towards women in the age group of 18-32 years.⁶ The gender distribution of respondents is skewed towards females, with 73 percent of respondents being female. Figure 3 summarises the respondents by gender.

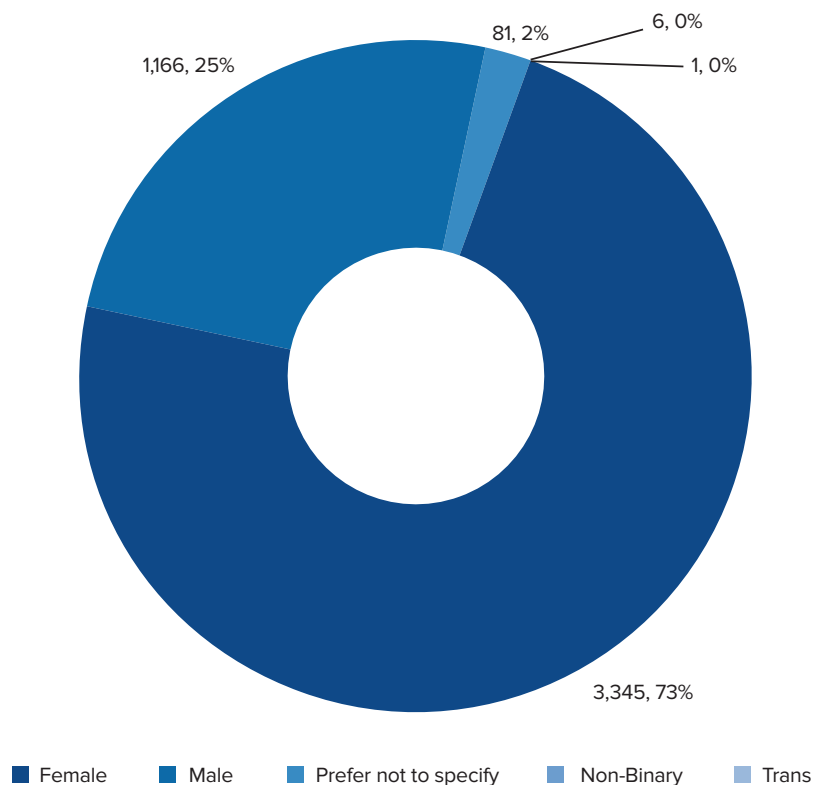


FIGURE 3: RESPONDENTS BY GENDER (NUMBER, %)

A small 23 percent of the survey respondents are students. The majority of respondents that are

students are between the ages of 18 and 26.

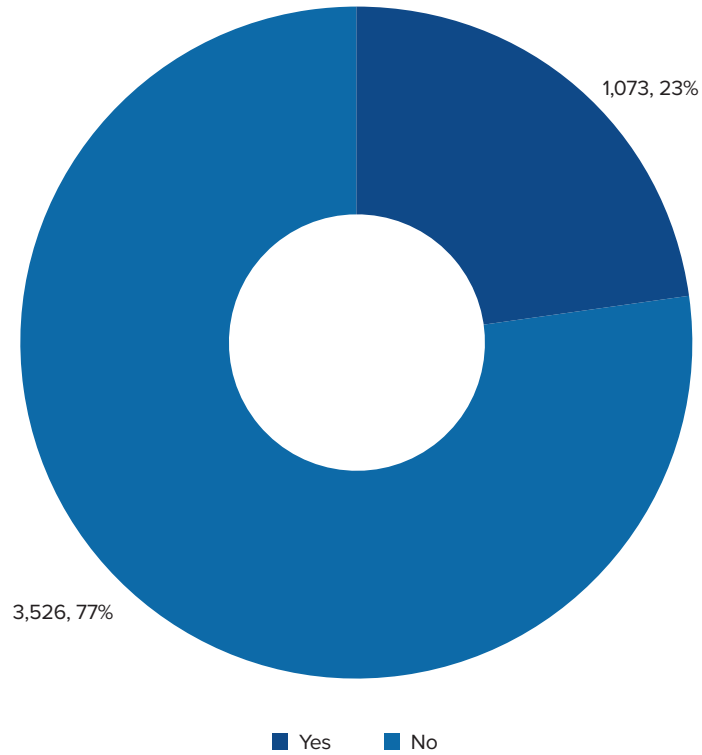


FIGURE 4: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS THAT ARE STUDENTS (NUMBER, %)

Seven of every ten (70 percent) of the respondents are employed. While one-third of the respondents are not employed, most of them (56 percent) are students. Of those that report being employed

prior to the lockdown, 56 percent were employed full-time, eight percent were self-employed, three percent were employed part-time, and three percent were employed as interns or apprentices.

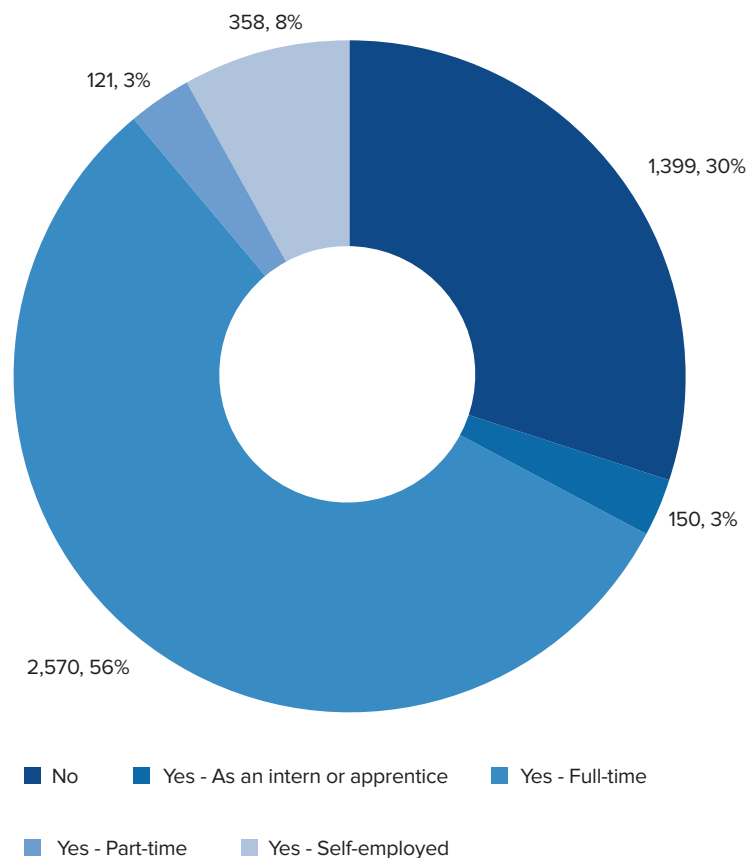


FIGURE 5: WERE YOU EMPLOYED BEFORE THE LOCKDOWN? (NUMBER, %)

More male respondents report having been employed full-time before the lockdown than female respondents, at 60 percent and 55 percent, respectively. More female respondents report not

being employed (33 percent), compared to 23 percent among males. More males were self-employed than females, at 12 and 6 percent, respectively.

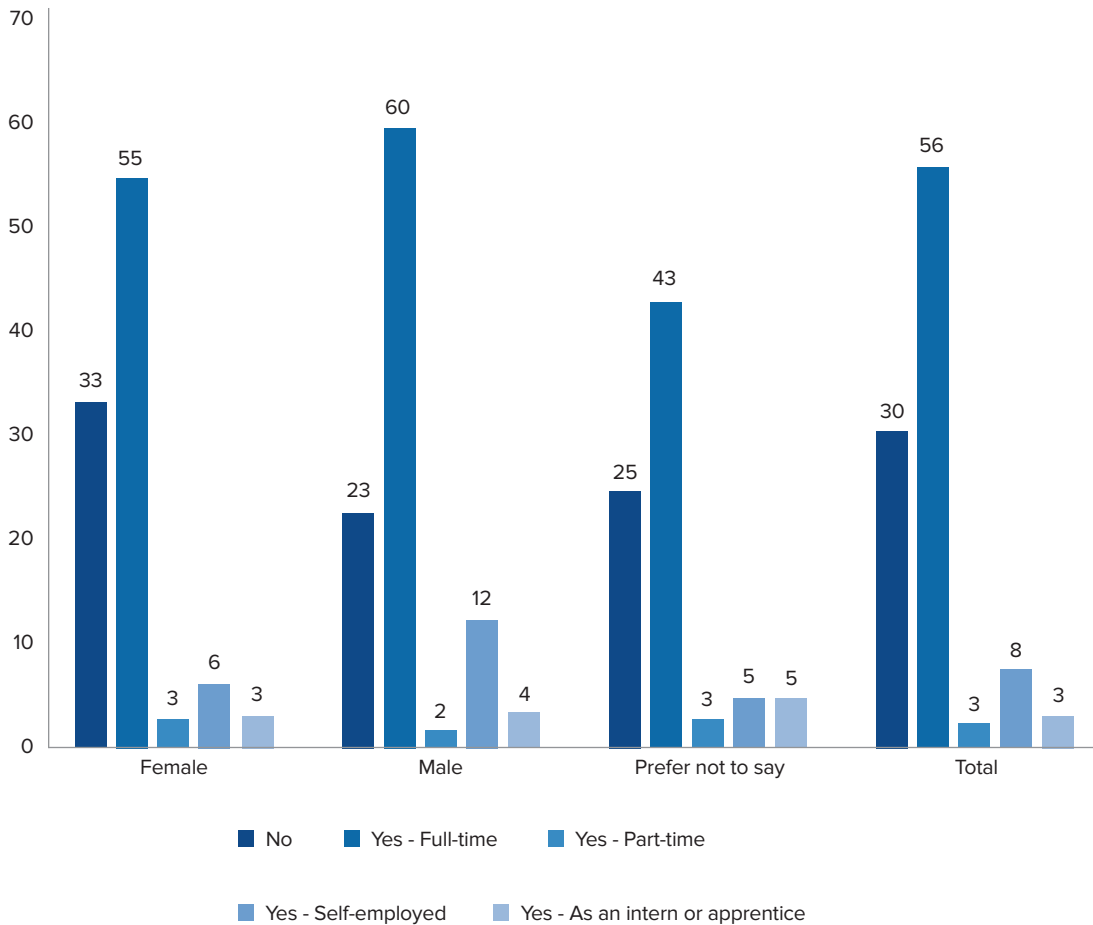


FIGURE 6: SHARE OF EMPLOYMENT BY GENDER AND TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Most respondents (71 percent) are spending the lockdown with their family. The remaining one-third of the respondents are either alone, with their significant other, staying with friends or housemates,

or with their extended family. Figure 6 shows the breakup of who the respondents are spending the lockdown with.

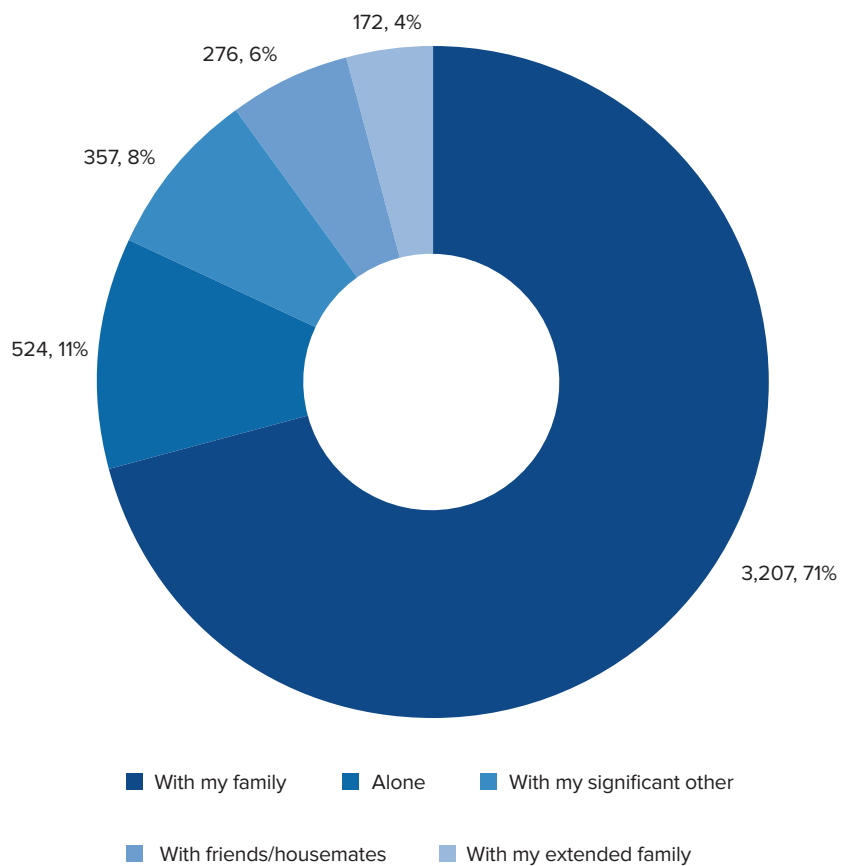


FIGURE 7: WHO ARE YOU SPENDING THE LOCKDOWN WITH? (NUMBER, %)

SUMMARY OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION:

The survey sample is made up of Indian youth between the ages of 18 and 32, who are living in India's six largest cities. The vast majority of respondents are female, at 73 percent. The largest share of respondents are also employed at 70 percent. Just 23 percent of respondents

are students. Most respondents are living at home with their family, and because of the nature of the survey being online, this analysis assumes that they have internet connectivity and access to a device. The next section explores the implications of the crisis and the lockdown on respondents' education, work and employment.



INDIAN YOUTH BETWEEN THE AGES OF
18 AND **32** WHO ARE LIVING
IN INDIA'S SIX LARGEST CITIES.



THE VAST MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS
ARE FEMALE, AT **73** PERCENT



THE LARGEST SHARE OF
RESPONDENTS ARE
EMPLOYED, AT **70** PERCENT



23 PERCENT
OF RESPONDENTS ARE STUDENTS



SECTION 2

EDUCATION AND CAREER

Most countries have temporarily closed educational institutions in response to the spread of COVID-19. This has meant that 1.2 billion learners have been impacted across 146 countries.⁷ In India, 320 million students overall, and 34.3 million students in higher education, have been impacted by the closure of education institutions.⁸

The survey asked respondents how their education and work have been affected by the lockdown. Are education institutions providing support to their students during this time? What modes of study are students able to do from home? For those that were employed before the lockdown, how has their work been affected?

One-third of students say that their institution has not made remote learning possible for them during the lockdown.

A majority (69 percent) of the respondents that are students (23 percent of the total sample) report that their educational institution has made provisions for them to continue their studies during the lockdown. One-third of students, however, say that their institution has not made remote

learning possible for them during the lockdown. There are differences between cities, with 78 percent of respondents in Bengaluru reporting that their institutions had made provisions for them to continue their studies, compared to just 59 percent in Mumbai.

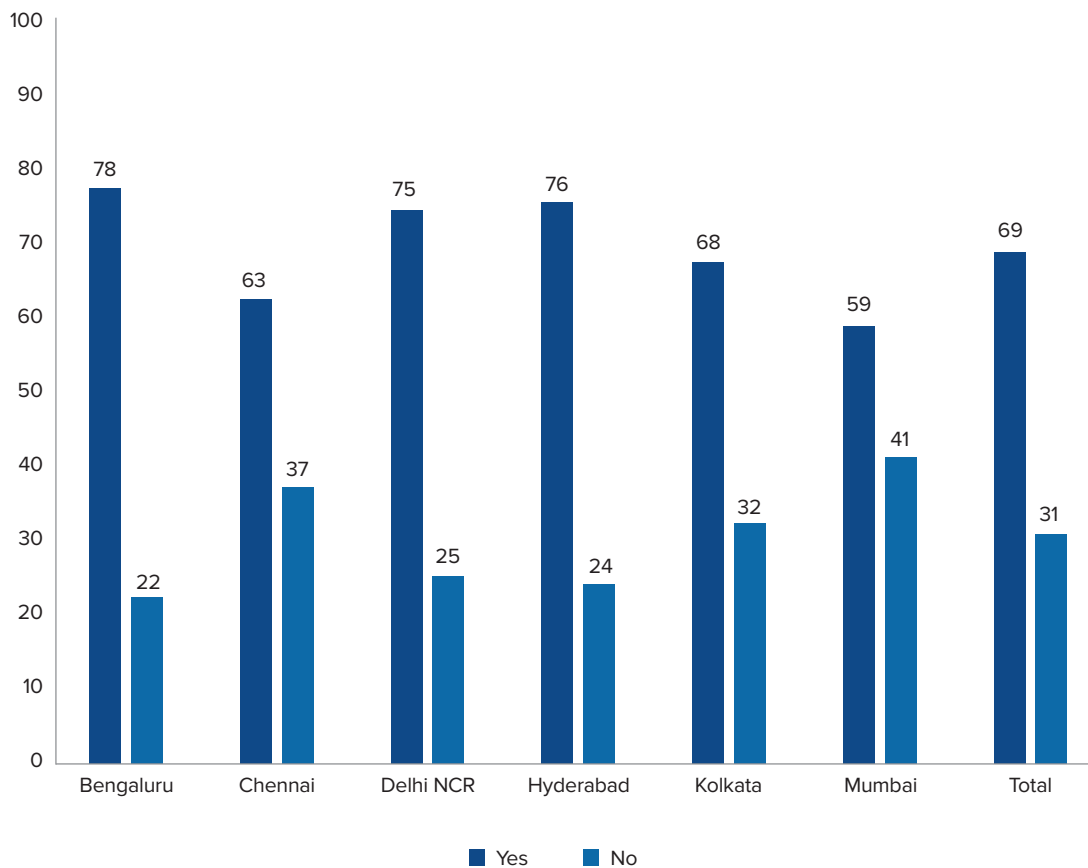


FIGURE 8: HAS YOUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION MADE PROVISIONS FOR YOU TO CONTINUE YOUR STUDIES DURING THE LOCKDOWN? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Of the 23 percent of respondents that are students, nearly three-quarters – 73 percent – feel that their educational institution has provided them with sufficient support during the lockdown. Meanwhile 26 percent of the respondents say that they have had a lack of support. Assessments vary slightly by gender, with 14 percent of males saying

that their institution has been very unsupportive, compared to just six percent of females. There are also differences between cities, with more students in Chennai and Bengaluru reporting that they have sufficient support from their education institutions, at 85 and 81 percent, respectively.

Nearly three-quarters – **73** percent – feel that their educational institution has provided them with sufficient support during the lockdown.

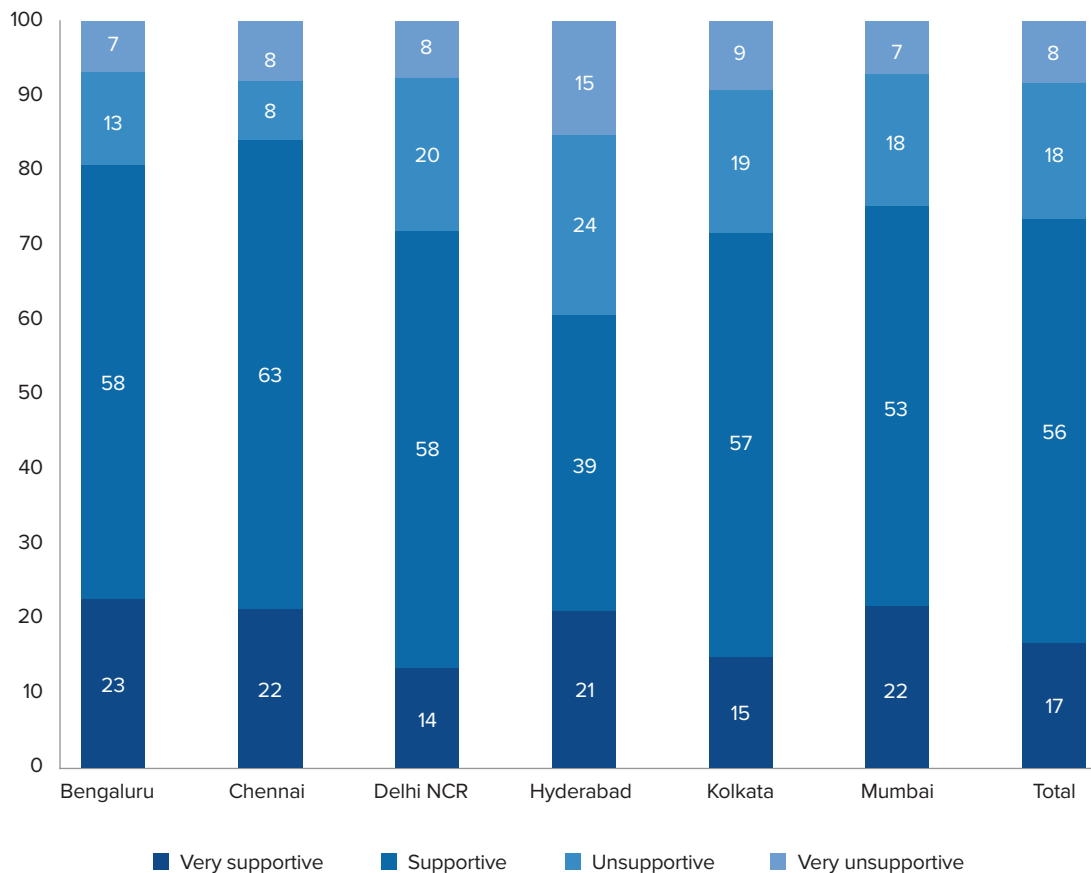


FIGURE 9: DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION HAS PROVIDED YOU WITH SUFFICIENT SUPPORT DURING THE LOCKDOWN? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Lockdowns everywhere have changed how education and learning need to be approached. In this context, teachers and students are facing a number of challenges including student health and wellbeing, the continuity of learning and teaching, equality, accessibility and connectivity, student engagement, and the lack of preparedness and capacity of teachers.⁹

Shifting to remote teaching and learning requires students to have internet access, devices, and spaces to work. Teachers are required to have the same, along with the

resources and ability to create online content. The implications of this in India are unclear. While internet penetration is relatively high in urban India at 65 percent, most people connect to the internet via their mobile phones.¹⁰ The availability of devices, and those that are suitable for schoolwork is likely a constraint for many students. After all, just 23 percent of households in urban India have a computer.¹¹ Moreover, there is a gender gap in mobile phone ownership, with 71 percent of males owning phones, compared to just 38 percent of females.¹²

For some, the transition to learning online has been relatively smooth, but for others the transition has been difficult or has yet to occur. To gauge how sophisticated online learning techniques are for students, the survey asked them what modes of study they are doing during the lockdown. Half of the students (52 percent) selected self-study. More students in Bengaluru are participating in virtual classroom activities than

any of the other cities, and around one-third of students are using videos and virtual tutorials. Hyderabad appears to be struggling the most to deliver live, diverse and engaging content to students as they shift to learning from home. While online learning has become a necessity, addressing the potential gaps in access and quality will be essential during the lockdown and beyond.

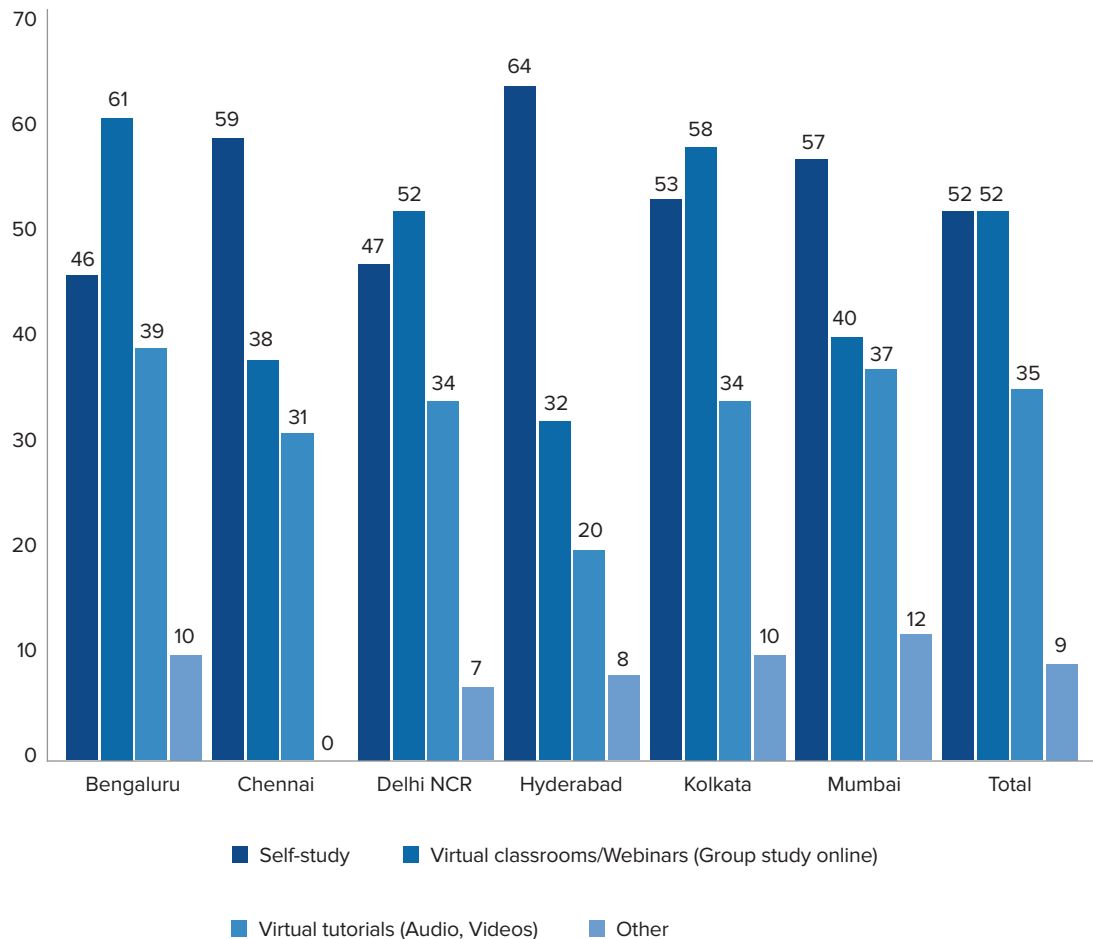


FIGURE 10: WHAT MODE OF STUDY ARE YOU ABLE TO DO FROM HOME? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT AS RESPONDENTS COULD SELECT MULTIPLE ANSWER OPTIONS.

The lockdown in India closed businesses, offices, Federal and State departments, transportation, and confined people to their homes. Only essential workers and industries were permitted to continue operations under the lockdown. This has meant that the economy and labour market have come to a standstill.

Of the respondents that report being employed prior to the crisis, 60 percent said that they were

working from home. However, one-quarter of the respondents say that they are *sitting idle as the nature of their job does not permit remote working*. Just three percent of respondents report that they are occasionally going to their workplace, and an even smaller two percent are regularly going to their workplace. One in every ten (10 percent) of respondents say none of these scenarios match their current situation.

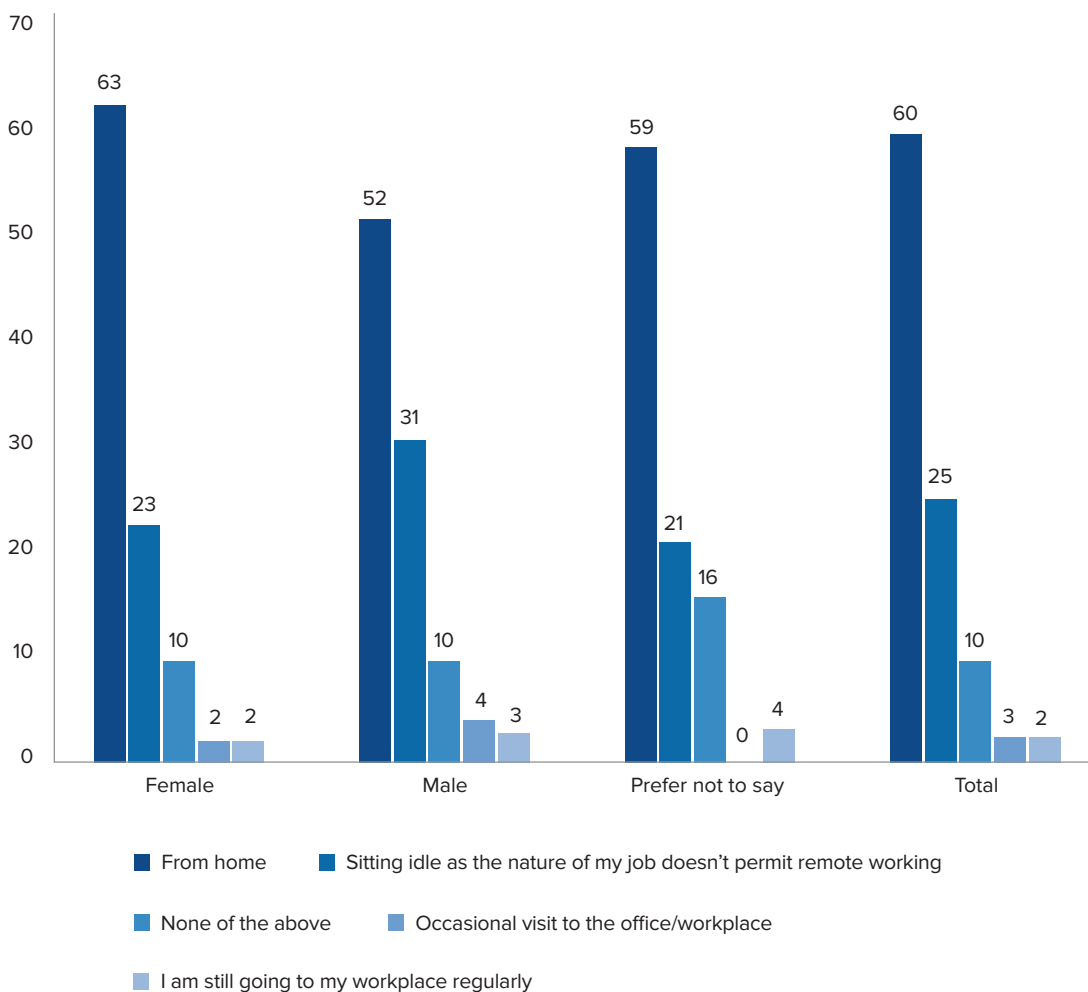


FIGURE 11: IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING, HOW ARE YOU WORKING DURING THE LOCKDOWN? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

The economic makeup of each of India's states and cities are diverse. Some cities have higher concentrations of essential workers such as those in healthcare, while others have a greater share of industries where teleworking is possible, or industries such as hospitality that have been closed completely. Some cities, therefore, will fare better than others in the months to come.

Some cities in India appear to be more digital-ready. In Bengaluru, for example, 72 percent of the respondents are currently working from home. This is compared to just 50 percent in Kolkata, 52 percent in Mumbai, and 60 percent in Delhi. In Kolkata, more than one-third (33 percent) of the young workforce is sitting idle as they are unable to do their job from home. This is compared to just 16 percent of respondents in Bengaluru and 25 percent overall.

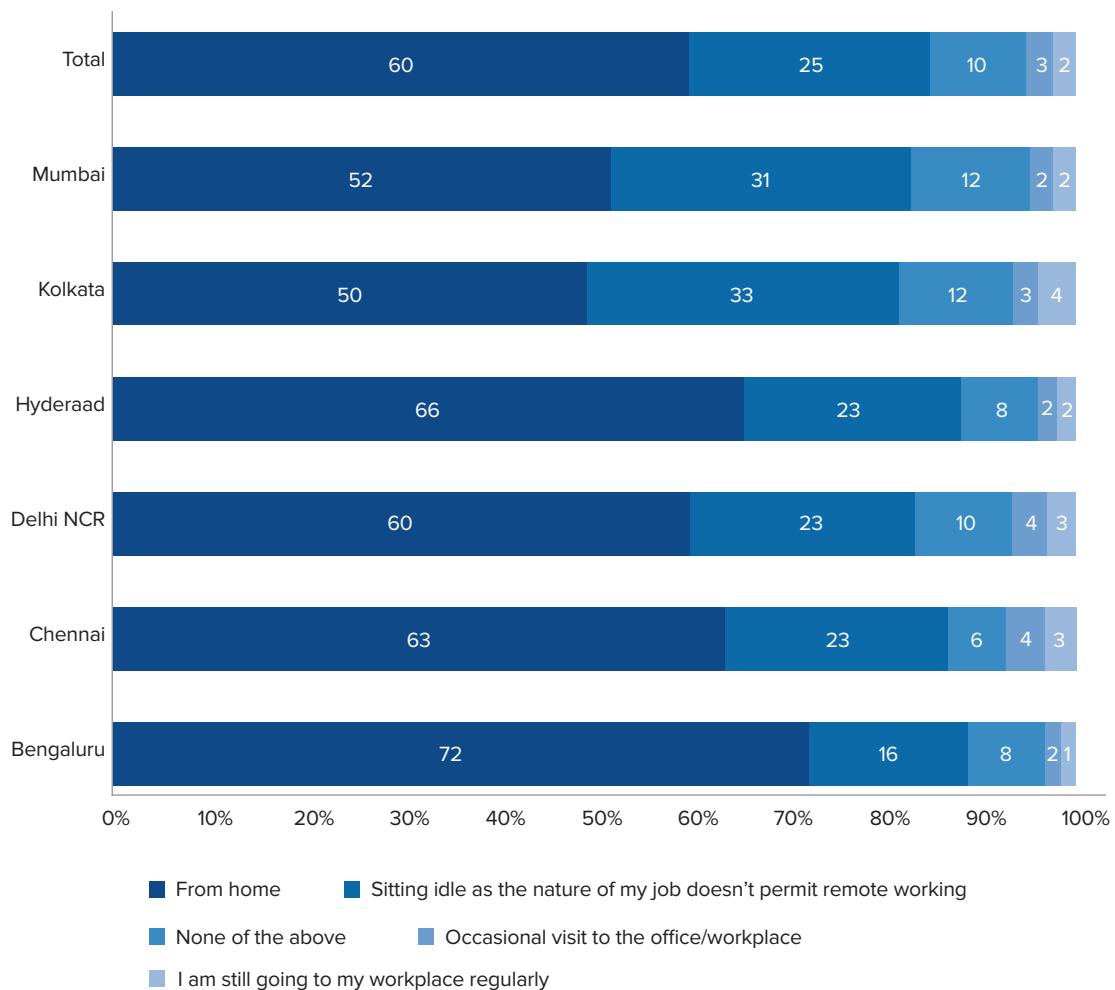


FIGURE 12: IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY WORKING, HOW ARE YOU WORKING DURING THE LOCKDOWN? (BY CITY, %)

The challenges faced by employers and employees alike are unprecedented, but some employers have been better at meeting the needs of their workers during this uncertain time. Most employed respondents feel that they are getting adequate support from their employer during the lockdown. One-third (33 percent) of the respondents say they feel *very supported* by their employer, while nearly half (47 percent) report feeling *supported*. One in every five

(20 percent) of the respondents say that their employer is not providing adequate support to them during the lockdown. Bengaluru stands out, with the highest share of respondents (88 percent) reporting that they have sufficient support. Respondents in Kolkata are the least satisfied with their employers, with nearly one-third (28 percent) saying that their employer is not providing them enough support during the lockdown.

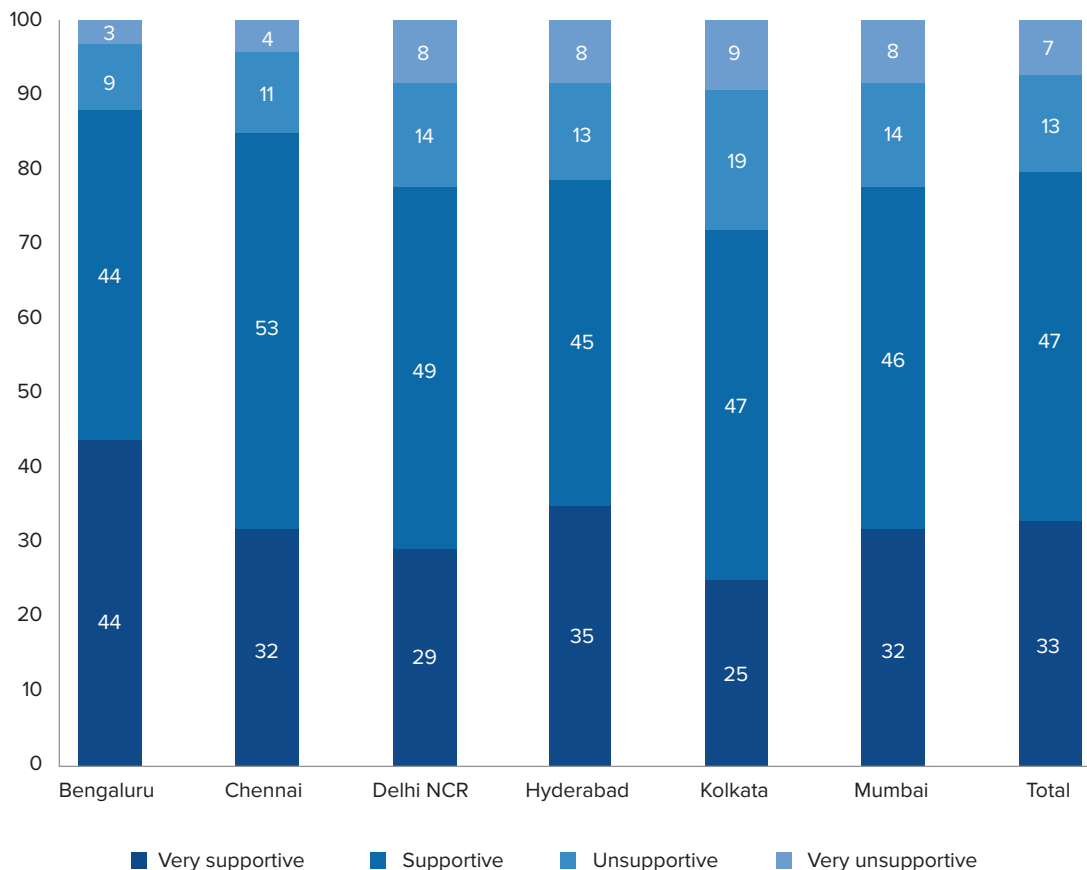


FIGURE 13: DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR EMPLOYER HAS PROVIDED YOU WITH SUFFICIENT SUPPORT DURING THE LOCKDOWN? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Across the world, the disruptions caused by confinement measures have led to substantial impacts on labour markets. For individuals, this has meant job loss, reduced hours, wage cuts, and extended leave. India is no exception: while 36 percent of employed respondents

report that their wages and work commitments have not changed due to the pandemic, 17 percent report that their hours have been reduced, 15 percent say that their wages have been cut, and eight percent have been forced to take unpaid leave.

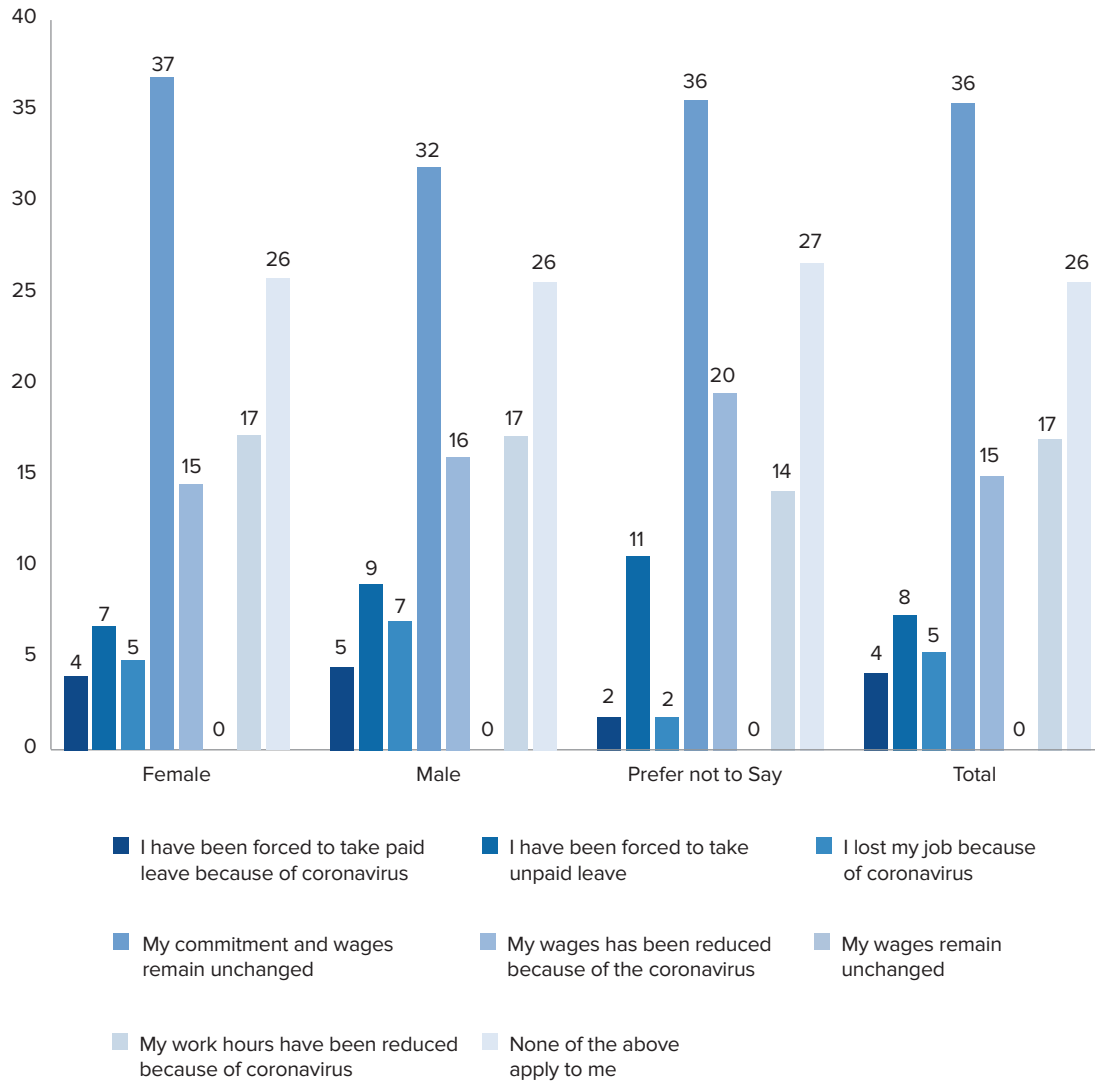


FIGURE 14: PLEASE SELECT ALL OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY TO YOU (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO 100% AS RESPONDENTS COULD SELECT MULTIPLE ANSWER OPTIONS.

In the United States (US), more than 36 million people filed for unemployment protection in eight weeks;¹⁴ in the UK, job loss claims increased by 70 percent in April.¹⁵ India's story is similar: the unemployment rate increased to an estimated 24 percent in the middle of May.¹⁶ This survey's results reveal that five percent of urban youth have lost their jobs due to COVID-19, with more job loss occurring in Delhi and Kolkata at seven percent

each. Reductions in working hours have also been highest in Delhi, with 20 percent of youth reporting reduced working hours. At the same time, eight percent of the respondents report being forced to take unpaid leave, while this number rises to 10 percent in Kolkata. Young workers in Bengaluru have been the least affected, with fewer workers losing their jobs, seeing pay cuts, or reductions in work hours.

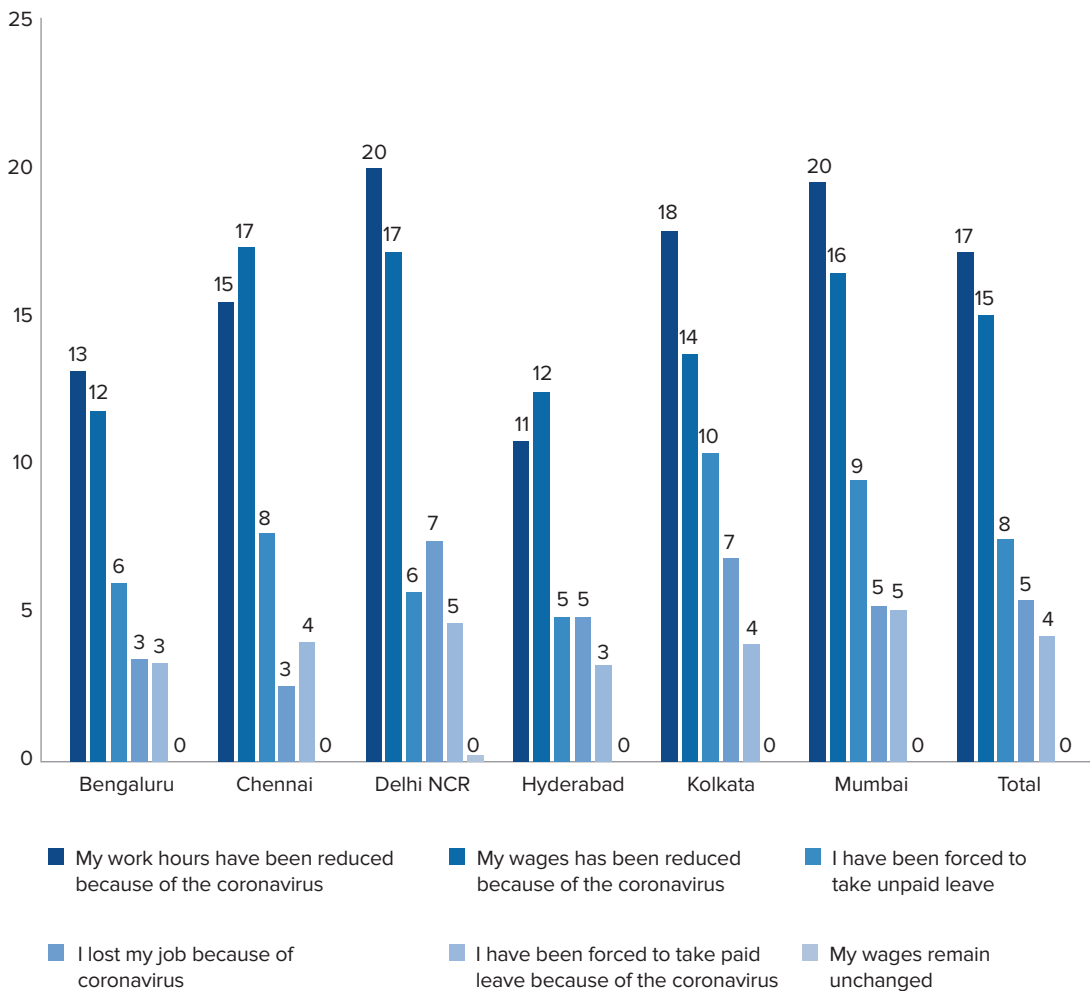


FIGURE 15: IMPACTS OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON EMPLOYMENT (BY CITY, %)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO 100% AS RESPONDENTS COULD SELECT MULTIPLE ANSWER OPTIONS.



SECTION 3

SOCIAL PROTECTIONS

Social protections are measures taken by the state to ensure the well-being of the population. These include health insurance, unemployment protection, income transfers, and parental leave. Many social protection programs are linked to individuals by their employer. In India, this means that they are accessible only to a small fraction of the workforce engaged in formal and organised employment.¹⁷ During a health crisis and in the wake of an economic recession,

social protections provide essential support to individuals and households, and help stabilise the economy.

The *Youth Lockdown Survey* asked respondents if workers have access to paid sick leave, health insurance or other basic social protections. The survey also asked respondents how they feel about access to necessities and healthcare during the ongoing crisis.

Just 31 percent of the respondents say that they have health insurance either through their employer or privately. Among youth that are employed as interns or apprentices, just two percent report having employer-provided health insurance, while 14 percent say they have private coverage. Among part-time workers, 16 percent have health insurance, 14 percent of which is private. Full-time employees are the most likely

to have health insurance at 39 percent. A little more than one-fifth (22 percent) of self-employed respondents say that they have private health insurance. More than twice as many respondents have employer-provided health insurance than private insurance, at 31 and 14 percent, respectively. During widespread job loss in India, many people are at risk of losing their health coverage.

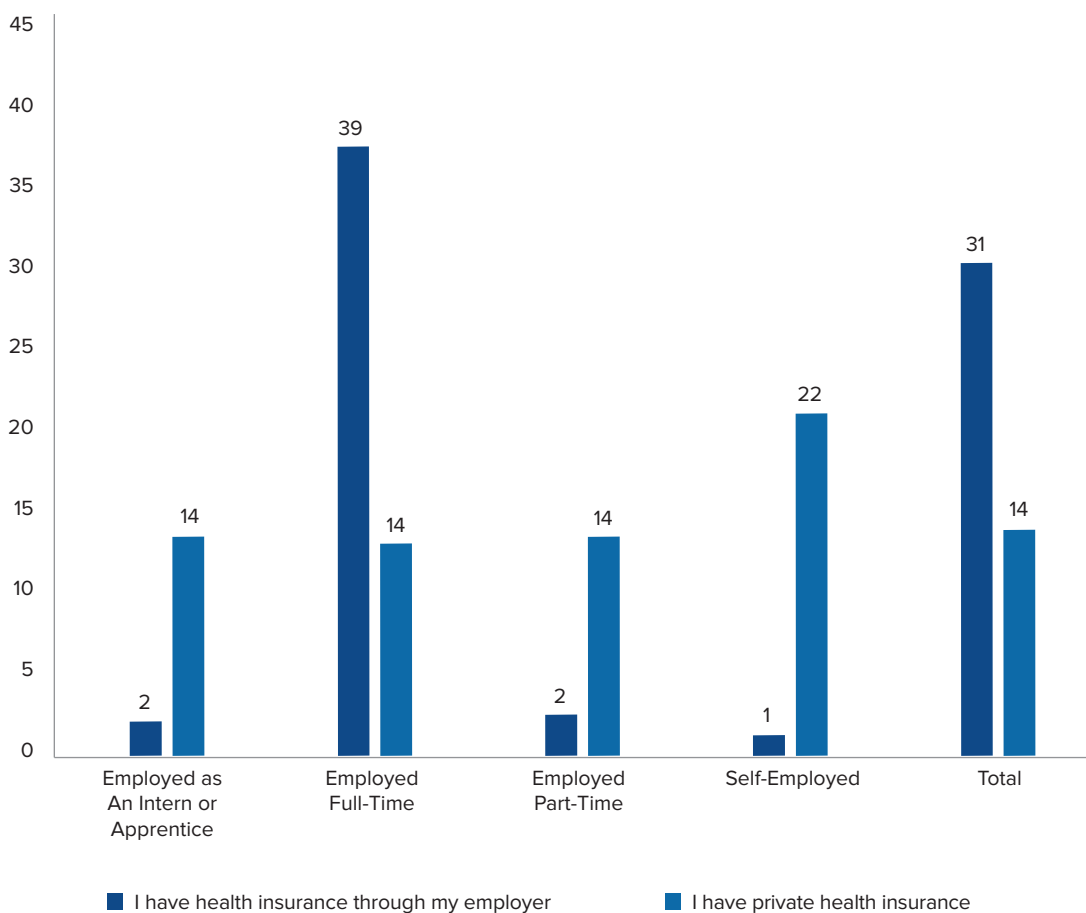


FIGURE 16: SHARE OF EMPLOYED RESPONDENTS WITH HEALTH INSURANCE (%)

COVID-19 has underlined the importance of paid sick leave. For many people, taking unpaid leave even when they are feeling unwell is not an option; amidst a pandemic, this presents a major risk to public health. As India begins to reopen, this will increasingly be a challenge as just 15 percent of employed respondents say that

they have paid sick leave. Moreover, as millions of people lose their jobs, just one percent of survey respondents say that they have unemployment insurance. A little over one-third (35 percent) of respondents don't have health insurance, paid sick leave or unemployment insurance.

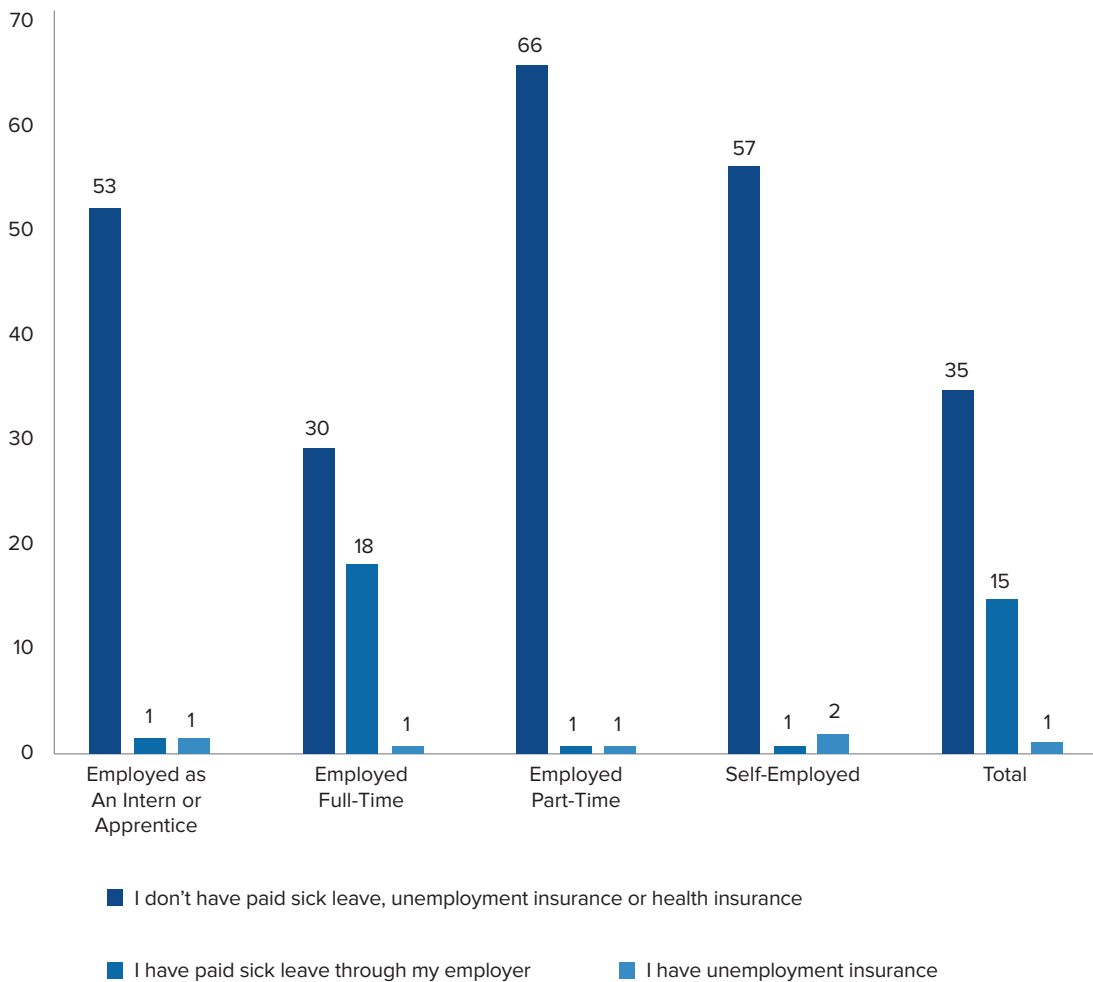


FIGURE 17: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS WITH PAID SICK LEAVE AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (%)

The surges in the number of COVID-19 cases around the world have strained hospital bed capacity, the availability of ICU beds, ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies.¹⁸ The survey asked youth what their perception is about the availability of adequate healthcare during the pandemic. Despite mostly not having health insurance, they feel optimistic about the availability of adequate healthcare.

More than half (66 percent) of the respondents think that they would have access to healthcare if they needed it right now. Twenty-four percent of the respondents are unsure, and 10 percent say that they *disagree or strongly disagree*. A slightly higher number of younger male respondents (23 percent) are confident about the availability of adequate healthcare than females (19 percent).

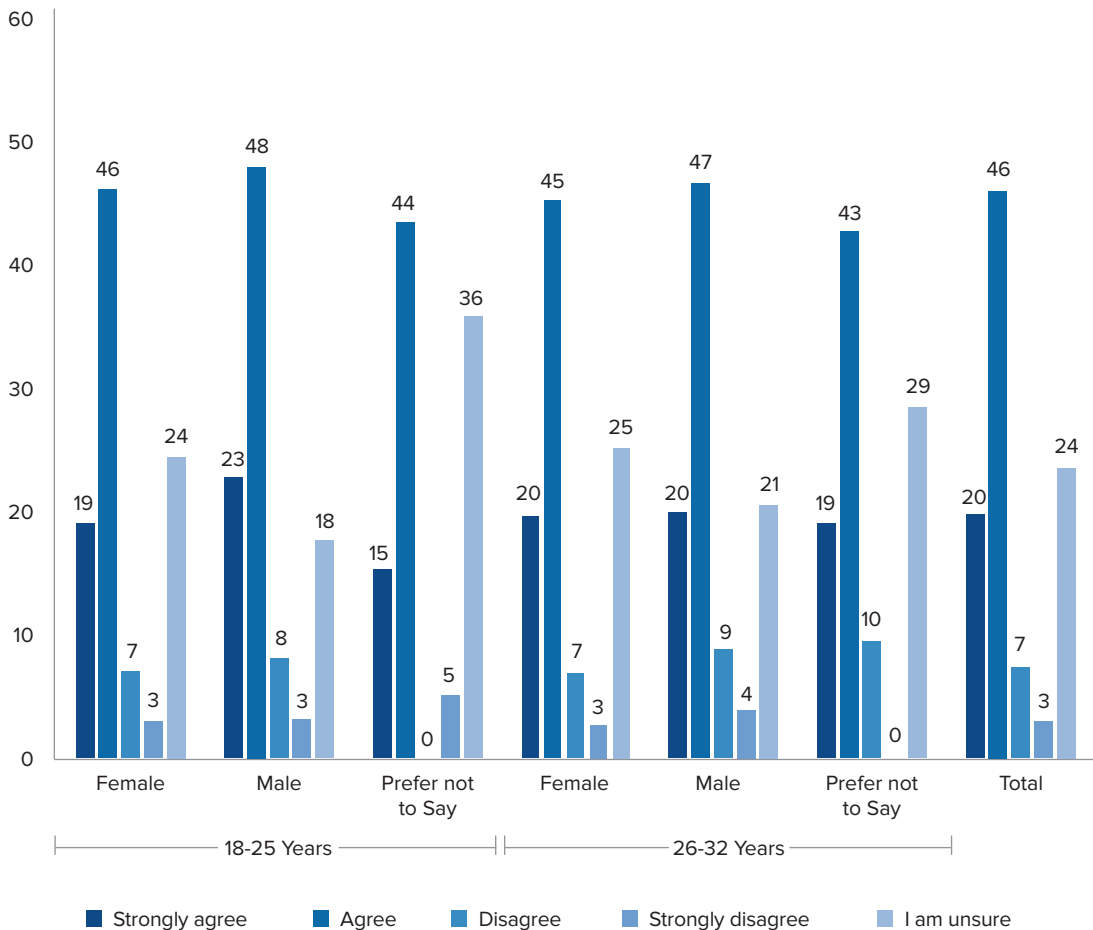


FIGURE 18: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: IF I NEEDED IT RIGHT NOW, I WOULD HAVE ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HEALTH CARE (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Global supply chains have been disrupted as firms, travel, trade and borders have closed around the world, and countries have real concerns about shortages in necessities such as medicines, food staples, and PPE. India's urban youth, however, seem less worried. A large majority (91 percent) of the respondents *agree or strongly agree* that they have all the basic necessities that they need during the lockdown.

Respondents spending the lockdown with their significant other or their family are the most likely to feel secure about the availability of necessities. Unsurprisingly, respondents that are living alone are the most likely to feel that they do not have all that they need during the lockdown.

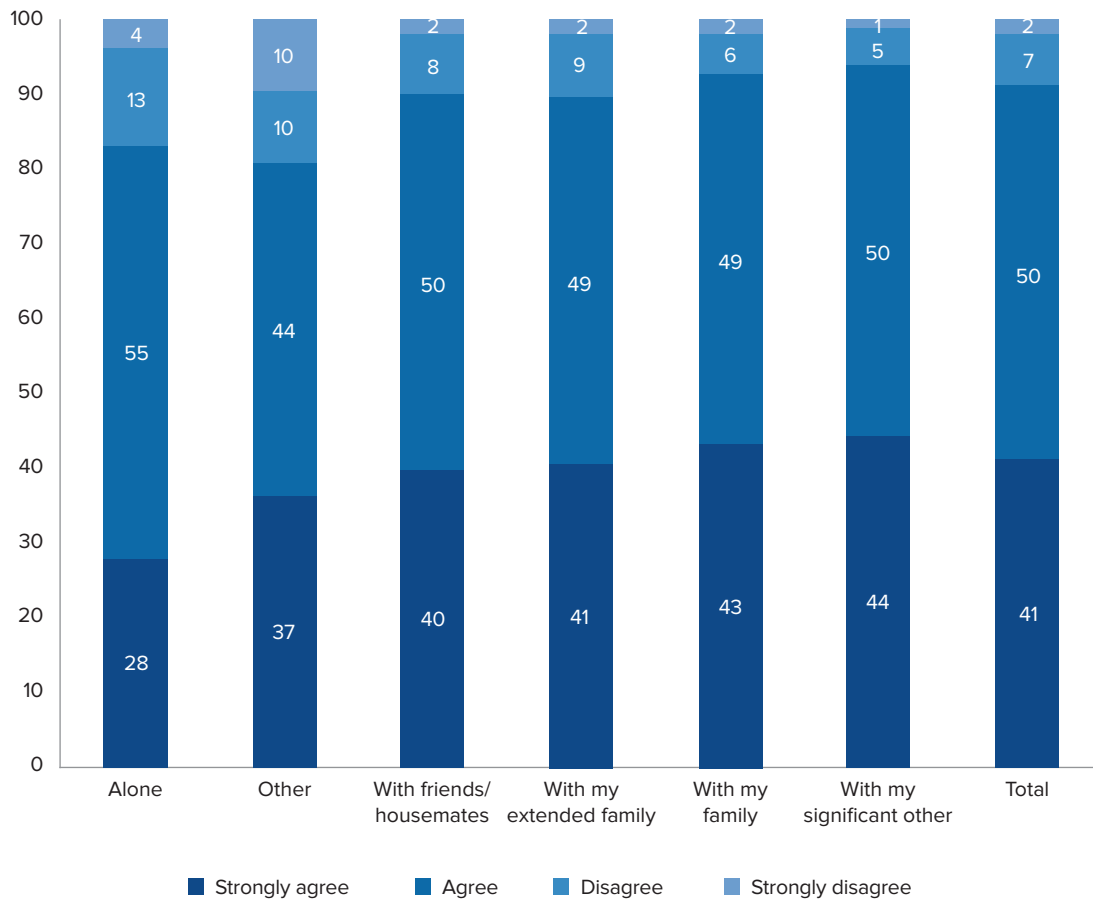
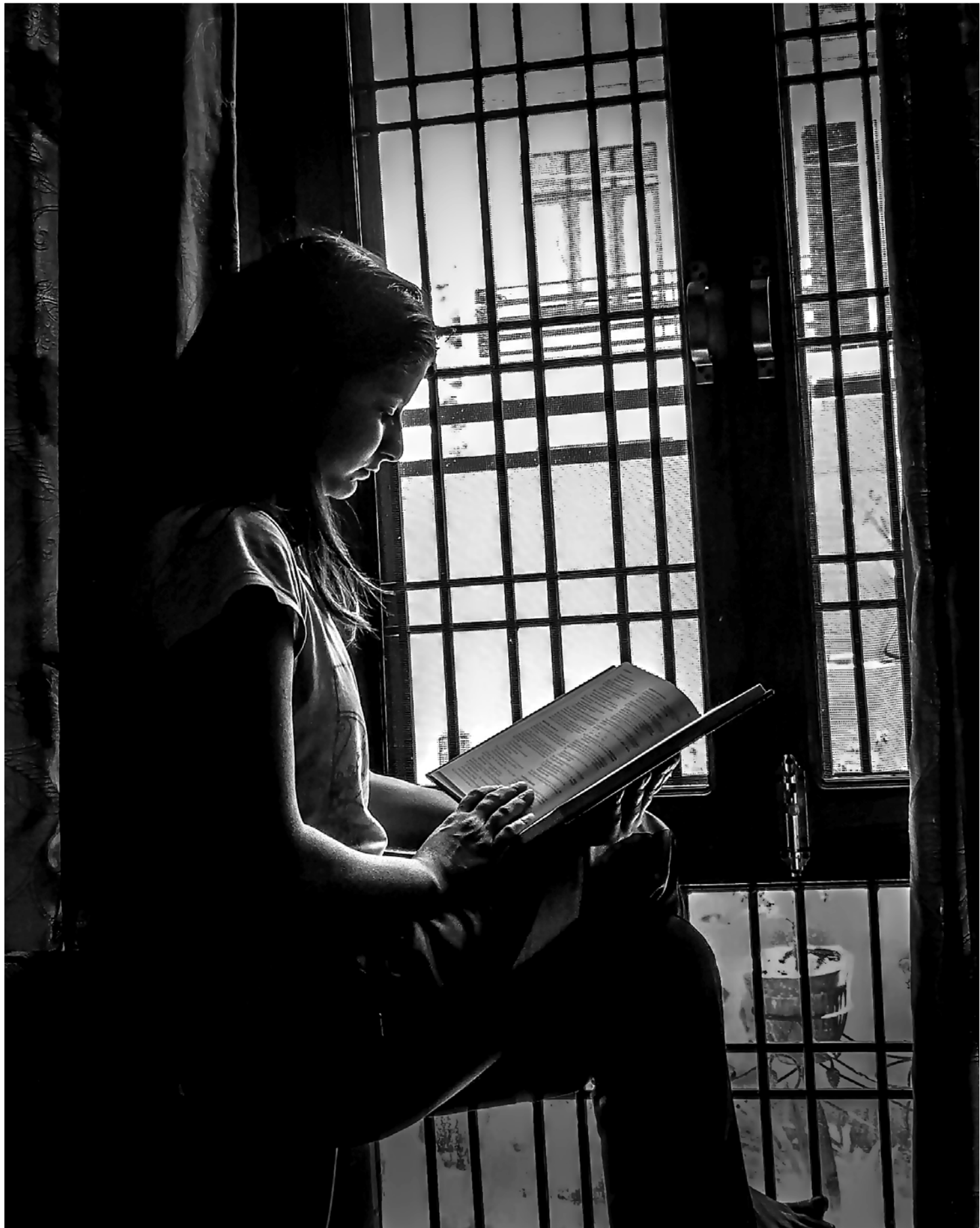


FIGURE 19: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT: I HAVE ACCESS TO ALL BASIC NECESSITIES THAT I NEED DURING THE LOCKDOWN (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.



SECTION 4

MENTAL WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

The lockdown measures implemented in India and across the globe are necessary for containing the spread of COVID-19. Experts agree that such efforts need to continue until the number of new cases decline, and there is fast and accurate means of contact tracing; or until a safe and effective vaccine is available.¹⁹ This means that even while the lockdown restrictions begin to ease, the post-lockdown period will remain filled with uncertainty. The impacts of this on education, employment, and the economy will be significant and long-lasting. So too will the impacts on individual wellbeing and mental health.

With an estimated 150 million people affected, India's mental health battle has traditionally been

one that has been silenced and stigmatised.²⁰ With the passing of the Mental Healthcare Act in 2017, the tide turned and, despite the law's weaknesses, it laid the foundation for allowing India to strengthen its mental health framework.²¹ However, with the ongoing crisis, India risks impeding progress as individuals struggle to access mental health resources and struggle with unprecedented challenges.

This survey asked the respondents how the lockdown has affected their overall wellbeing. How are people coping and responding to the lockdown? How many people feel that their physical and emotional wellbeing is protected while under the lockdown? What positive trends are emerging? Are individuals engaging in new digital communities and finding support online during this crisis?

The survey first asked the respondents how they feel the lockdown has affected their mental health. More than one-third (37 percent) of the respondents say that they feel their mental health has been *strongly impacted* by the lockdown. Just 11 percent of the respondents say that their mental well-being has not been impacted by the

lockdown. More respondents between the age of 18-25 report feeling that their mental wellbeing has been strongly affected at 41 percent, compared to 35 percent of 26-32 year-olds. Non-binary respondents between the ages of 18 and 25 have the highest rate of being strongly affected.

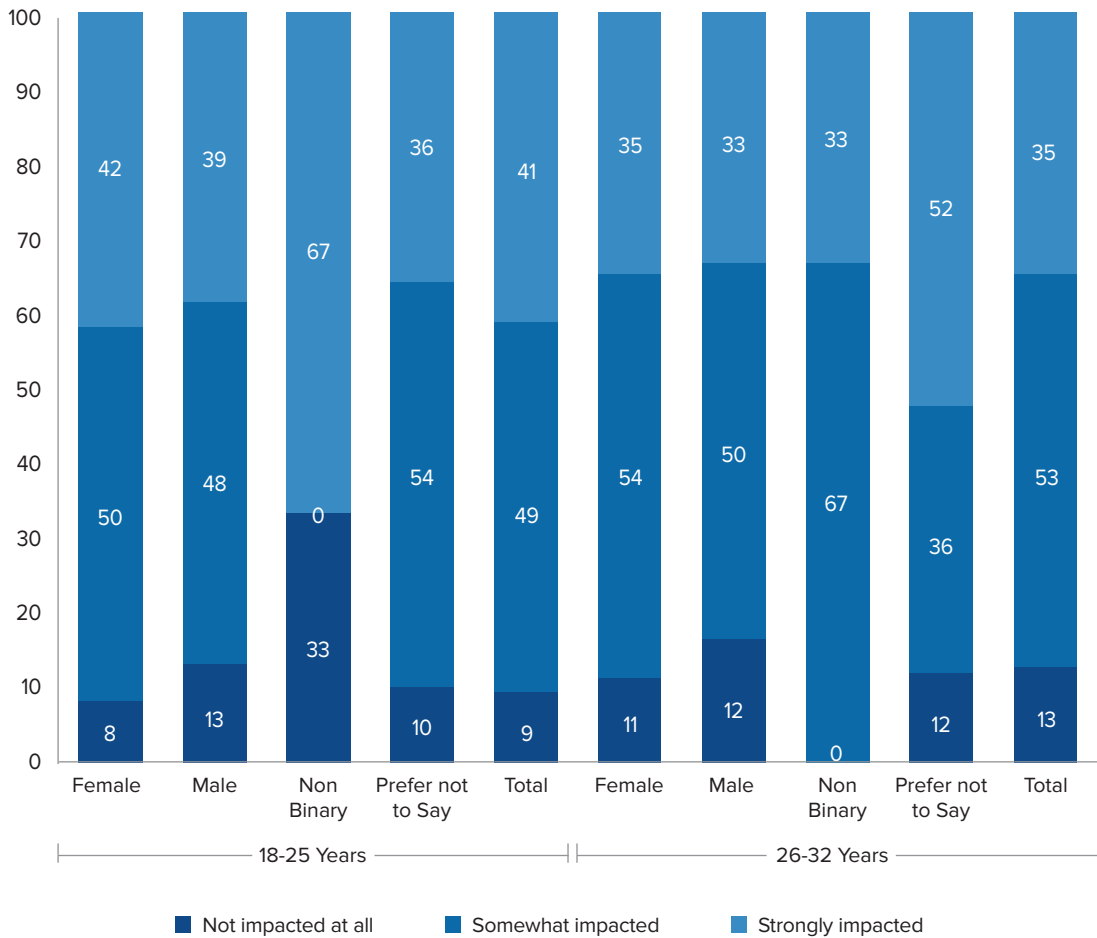


FIGURE 20: HOW MUCH DO YOU FEEL YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY THE LOCKDOWN? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Most respondents (71 percent) are spending the lockdown with their family, but one-third of them are either alone, with friends, their significant other or extended family. The results show that those who are with their significant other are slightly more likely to say that they do not feel that their mental wellbeing has been affected. On the other hand, more than half (53 percent) of

respondents who are alone say they feel that their mental wellbeing has been *strongly impacted*. Those that are spending the lockdown with their family are not exempt from the psychological and emotional impacts of the lockdown. More than one-third (35 percent) of those staying with their family say that they feel their wellbeing has been *Strongly impacted*.

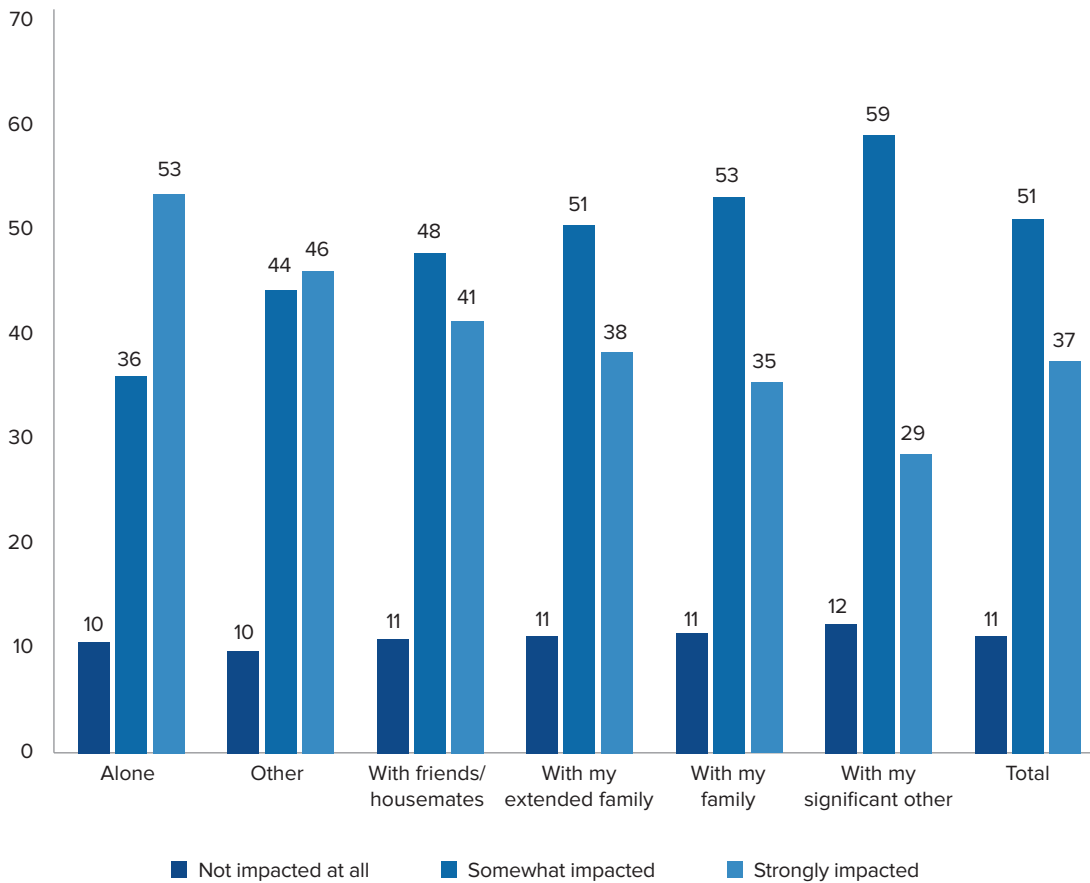


FIGURE 21: HOW MUCH DO YOU FEEL YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY THE LOCKDOWN? (BY WHO YOU ARE SPENDING IT WITH, %)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Young people are at a higher risk of suffering from the psychological and emotional stress of the outbreak.²² Being separated from friends, colleagues and normal everyday activities has

left many young people feeling alone. More than six of every ten (65 percent) of the respondents report feeling *lonely* or *very lonely* during the lockdown.

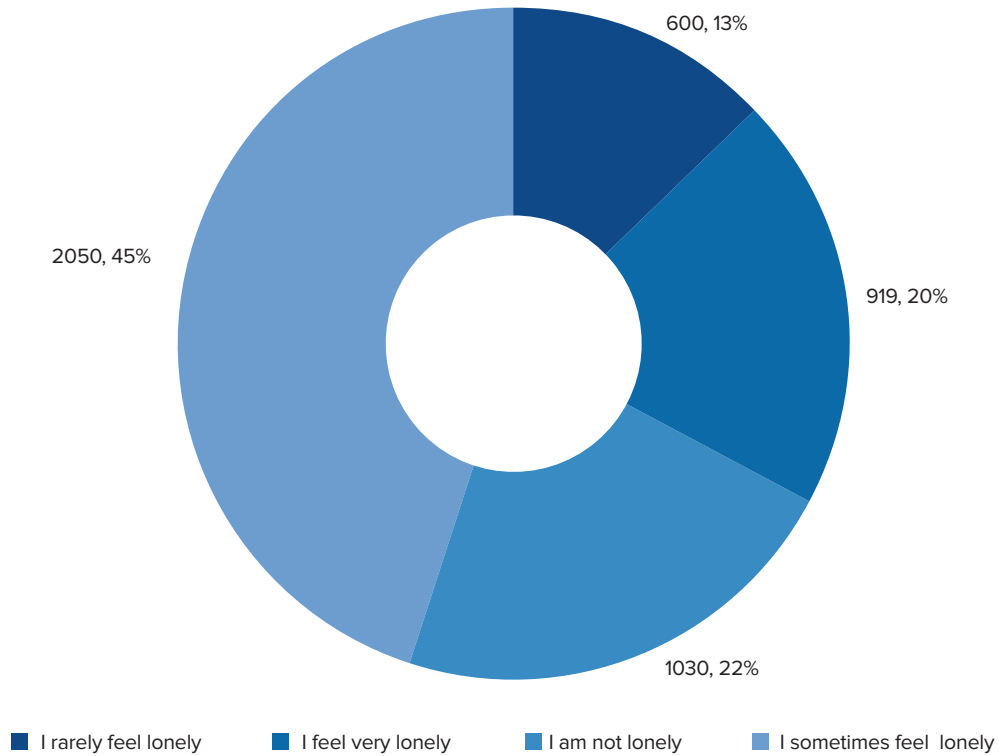


FIGURE 22: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS THAT REPORT FEELING LONELY DURING THE LOCKDOWN (%)

In need of human contact, many young people are reaching out to friends and colleagues that they have not been in touch with in a long time.

More than one-third (37 percent) of youth say that they are in touch with someone they have not connected with for a while.

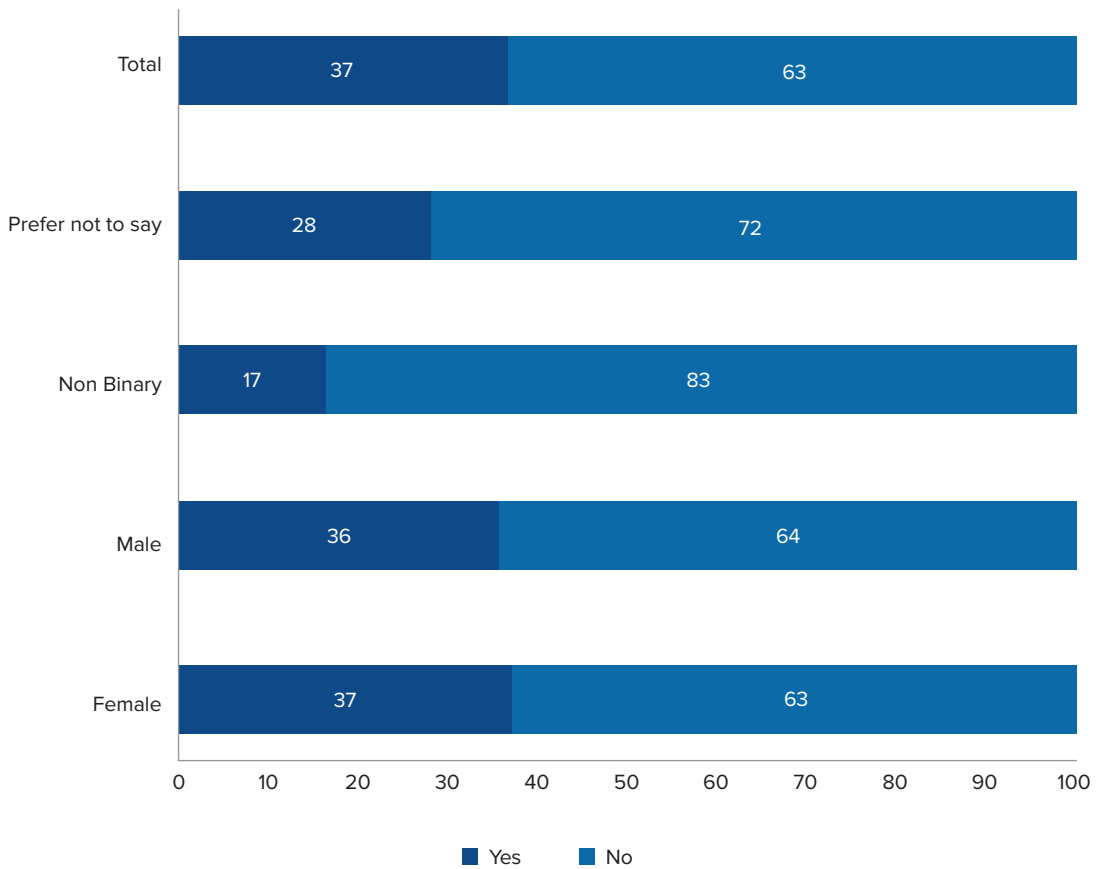


FIGURE 23: SINCE THE LOCKDOWN, HAVE YOU BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ANYONE THAT YOU HADN'T BEEN IN TOUCH WITH FOR A LONG TIME? (%)

While most youth feel that their family and significant other are supportive during the lockdown, 16 percent of respondents do not feel that they have the needed support.

Respondents that are spending the lockdown with their significant other are most likely to report feeling that they have sufficient support at 44 percent.

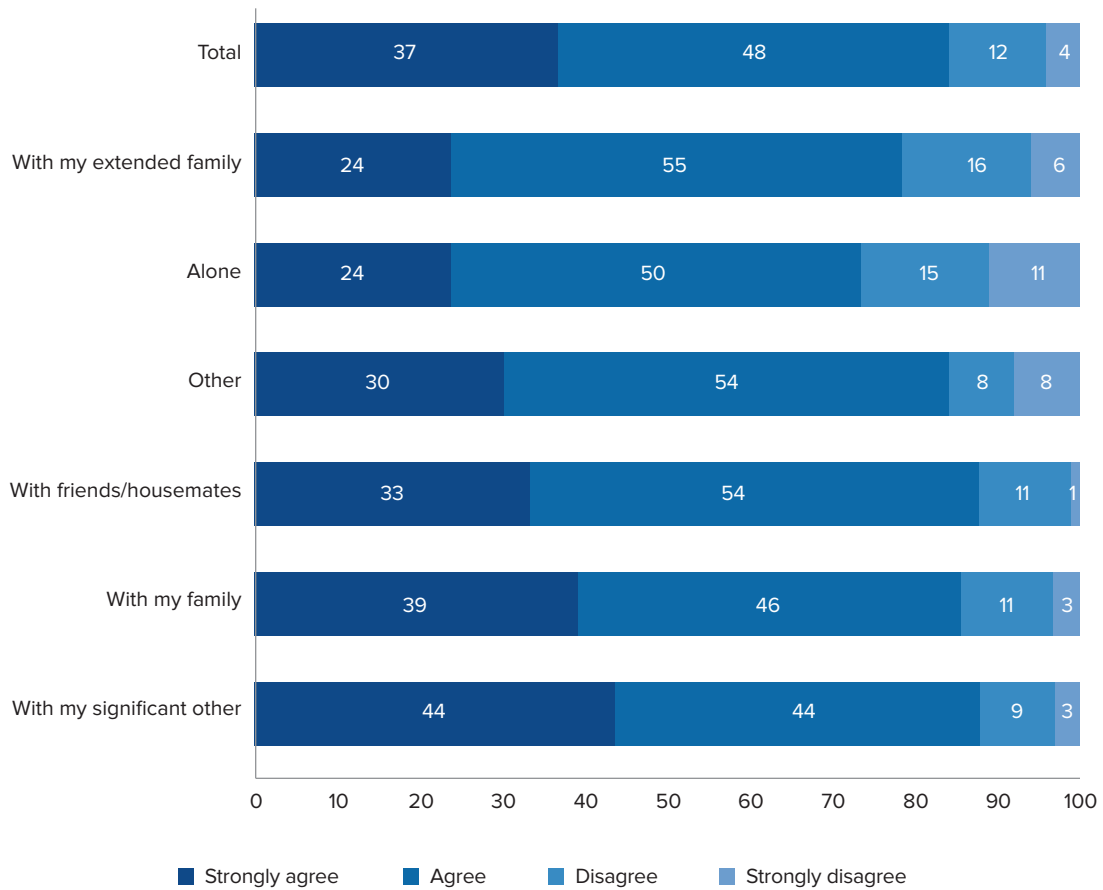


FIGURE 24: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: I FEEL VERY SUPPORTED BY MY FAMILY/SIGNIFICANT OTHER DURING THE LOCKDOWN (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Previous disasters and subsequent disruptions have shed light on the increased risk of domestic violence during times of uncertainty.²³ Indeed, in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, confinement measures around the world have led to a rise in the incidence of domestic violence. The UK domestic violence hotline, for instance, saw a 25-percent increase in calls since the

lockdown began.²⁴ Similarly, France has had a 30-percent increase in reports of domestic violence, and in Argentina, since March 10th, the increase has been 25 percent. Other countries like Canada, Germany, and the US have also reported increases in cases of domestic violence and demand for emergency shelter since lockdown measures have been implemented.²⁵



**THE UK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
SAW A **23** PERCENT INCREASE IN
CALLS SINCE THE LOCKDOWN BEGAN.**

FRANCE HAS HAD A **30 PERCENT
INCREASE IN REPORTS OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.**

25 ARGENTINA HAS SEEN A
PERCENT INCREASE IN REPORTS
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

India, too, has seen a surge in domestic violence cases following the lockdown.²⁶ The sense of isolation coupled with enhanced mental and financial stress, has increased the potential for physical aggression. A significant 21 percent of youth say that they do not feel safe from physical and emotional harm at home during the lockdown. More non-binary youth report feeling unsafe from physical and emotional harm during the

lockdown at 33 percent.²⁷ Data from other parts of the world reveal that trans-gender and non-gender conforming individuals face significantly higher rates of physical violence from their intimate partners, physical hate violence, and police violence.²⁸ This is also true in India, where gender-diverse populations face stigma, marginalisation, discrimination and violence.²⁹

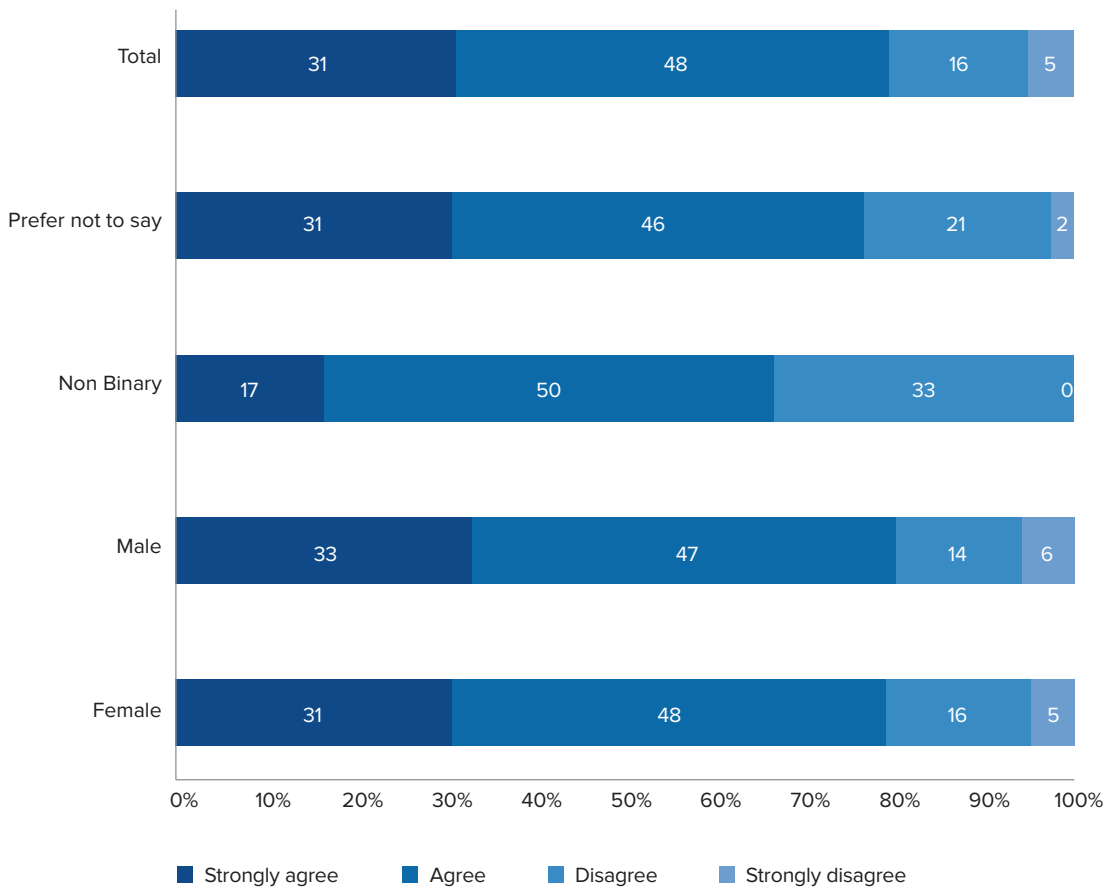


FIGURE 25: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: AT HOME DURING THE LOCKDOWN I FEEL SAFE FROM PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HARM (%)

Respondents who are alone or spending the lockdown with extended family are the most likely to report feeling unsafe from physical and emotional harm during the lockdown. Nearly one-third (29 percent) of the respondents who are staying with extended family during the

lockdown report disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they feel safe. Respondents staying with their significant other are the most likely to say that they feel safe from harm during the lockdown with 85 percent *agreeing* or *strongly agreeing*.

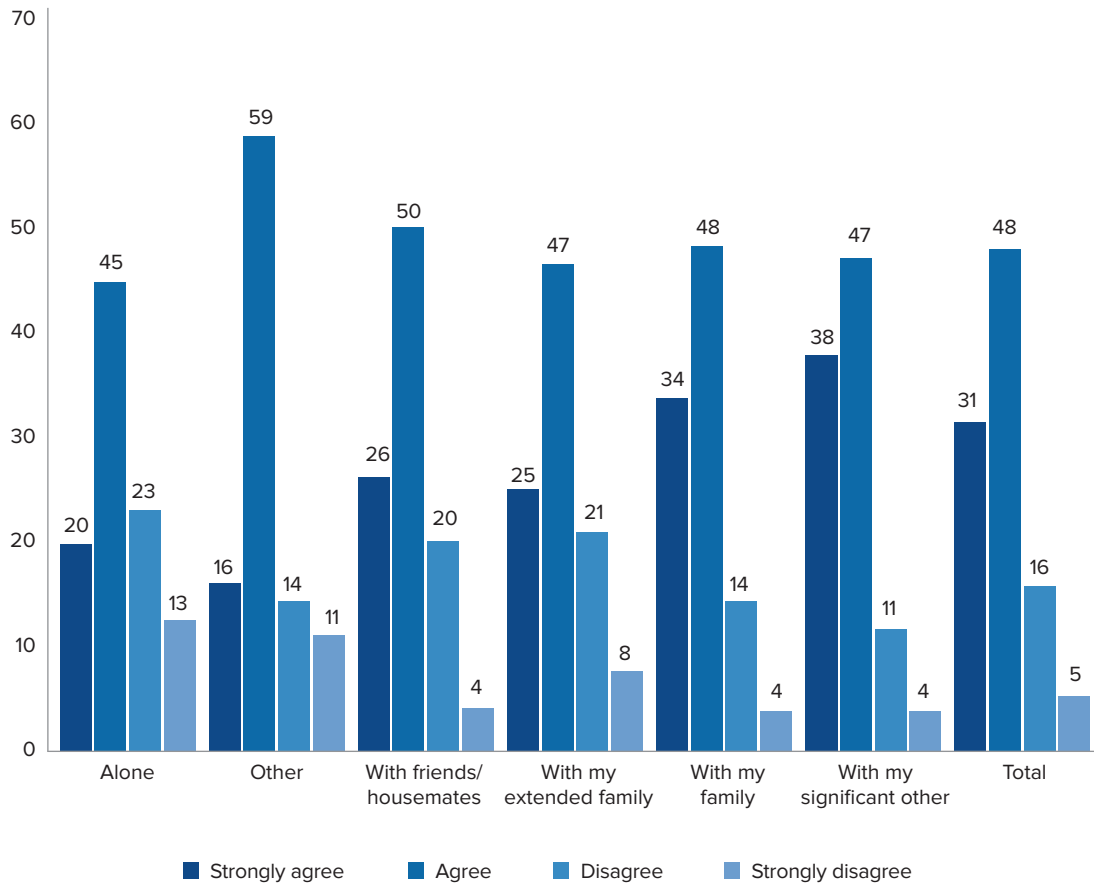


FIGURE 26: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: AT HOME DURING THE LOCKDOWN I FEEL SAFE FROM PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HARM (BY WHO I'M STAYING WITH, %).

The survey asked respondents what activities they have been doing during the lockdown. Most youth report that they are keeping themselves occupied by listening to music, reading, listening to podcasts, and watching TV series and movies.

More than half (53 percent) of the respondents say that they are talking to friends and family, 25 percent say that they are working more, 24 percent are exercising, and 16 percent have started a new hobby.

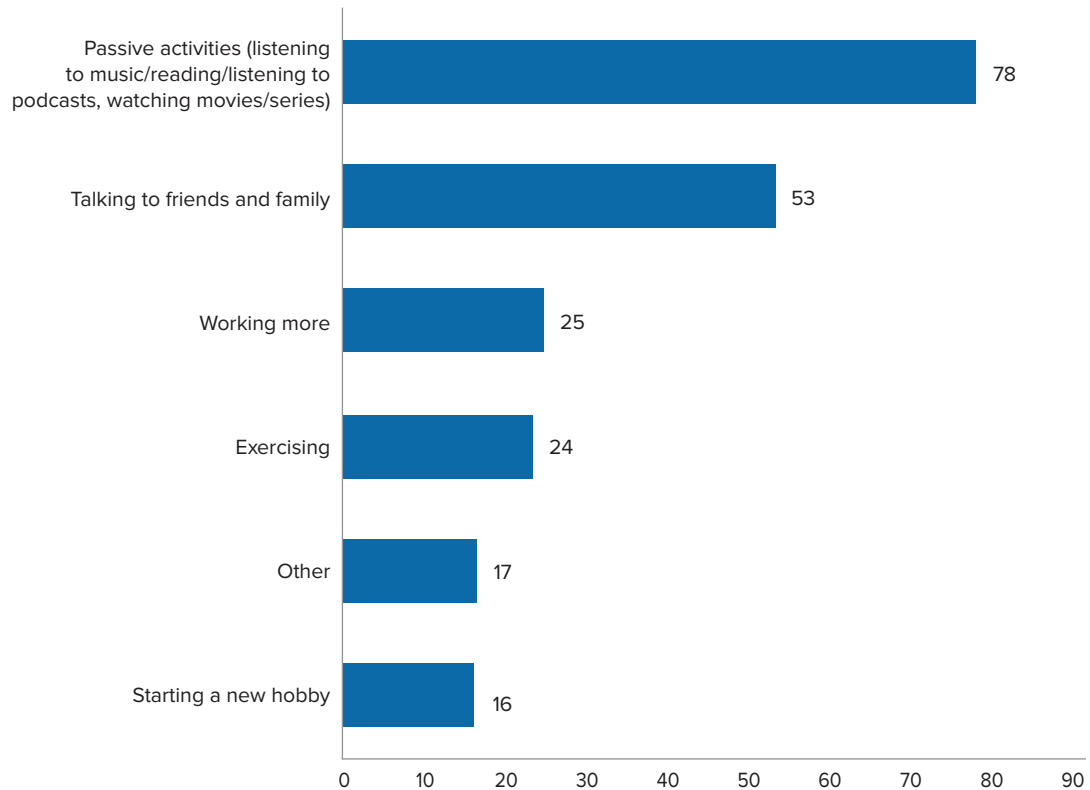


FIGURE 27: HOW ARE YOU KEEPING YOURSELF OCCUPIED DURING THE LOCKDOWN? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Under the lockdown, more social activities have shifted online. More than half (53 percent) of the respondents say they are using digital tools to keep in touch with their family and friends. One in every five (20 percent) of youth respondents report becoming a part of a new digital community during

the lockdown, and 35 percent say they have continued to participate in their existing online communities. This harks back to pre-pandemic trends, where according to a 2009 internet survey, Indian internet users are more likely to make friends online than their global counterparts.³⁰

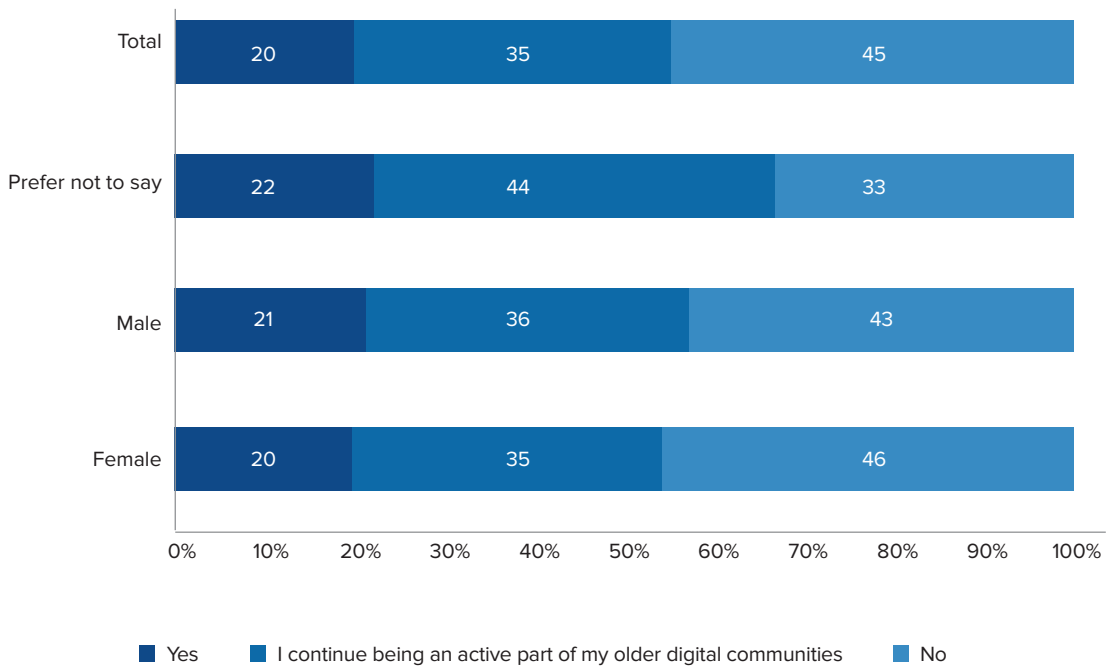


FIGURE 28: SINCE THE LOCKDOWN HAVE YOU BECOME PART OF ANY NEW DIGITAL COMMUNITIES? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

The most common digital communities that youth have joined since the lockdown are centred around

friends and family, followed by communities related to work, hobbies and passions.

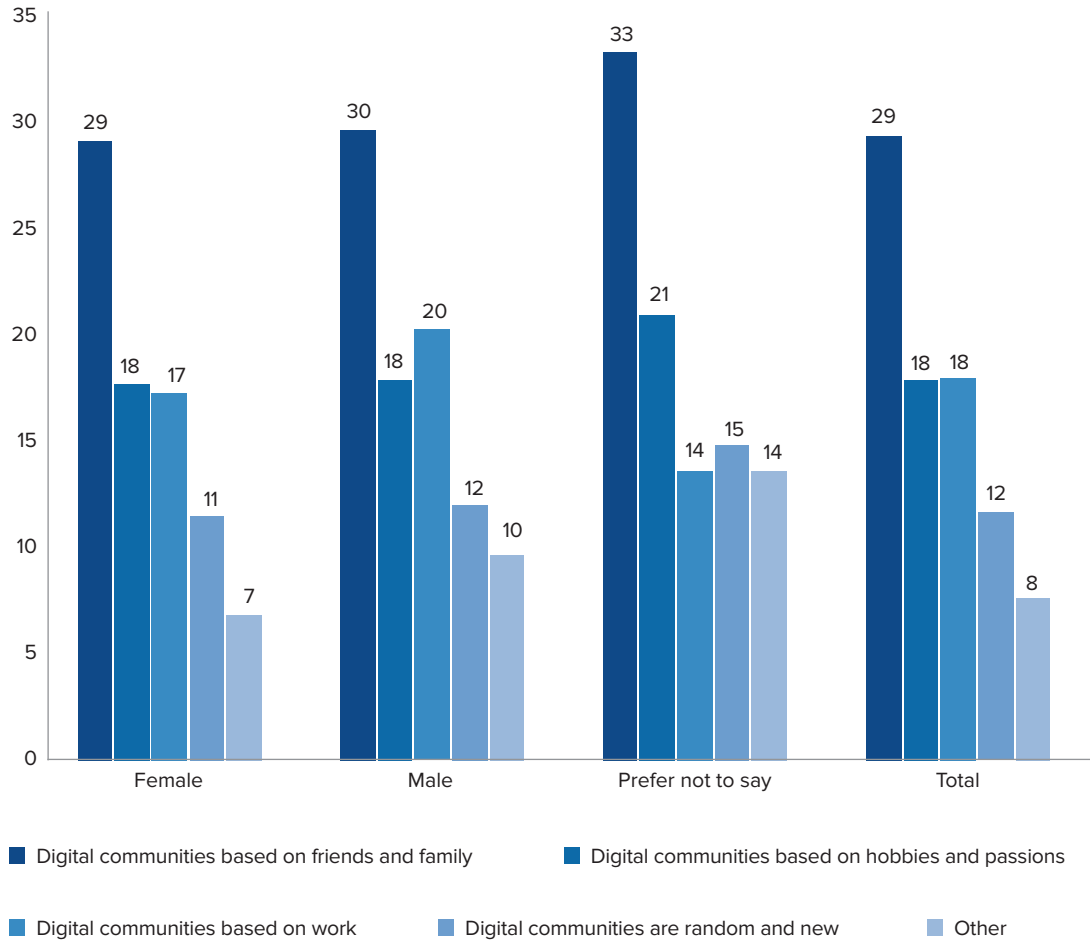


FIGURE 29: PLEASE SELECT THE TYPE OF DIGITAL COMMUNITIES THAT YOU HAVE ENGAGED WITH DURING THE LOCKDOWN: (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO 100% AS RESPONDENTS COULD SELECT MULTIPLE ANSWER OPTIONS.

Crises often inspire people to contribute. During the lockdown, 47 percent of respondents say they have contributed to initiatives aimed at responding

to the crisis. Slightly more male respondents report having made contributions than female respondents, at 51 and 45 percent, respectively.

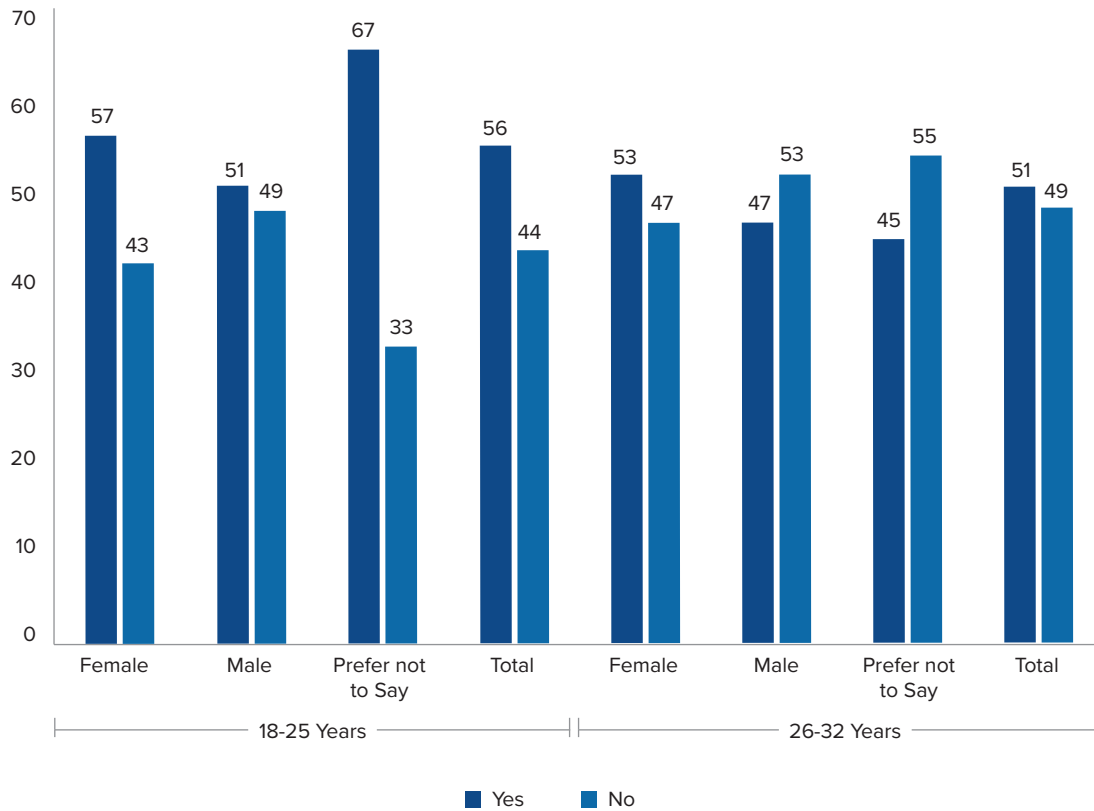


FIGURE 30: HAVE YOU CONTRIBUTED TO GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES, NGOS AND CITIZEN GROUPS WHO ARE HELPING IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS? (%)

The most common contributions that youth have made in response to COVID-19 is in the form of donations, at 63 percent. This is followed by helping in relief efforts.

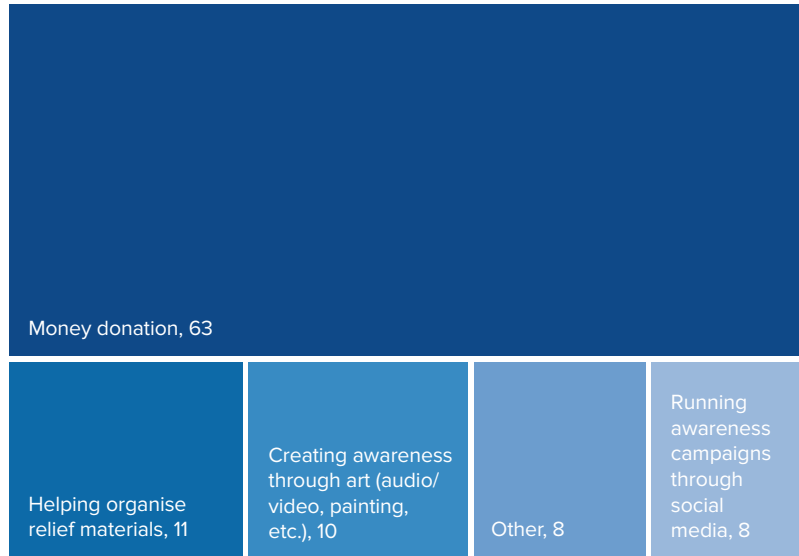


FIGURE 31: THE TYPES OF CONTRIBUTIONS YOUTH HAVE MADE IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (%)

Youth are worried about many aspects of the pandemic and its impacts on their lives and society. Unsurprisingly, their greatest worry right now is that they or someone they care about will contract the virus. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents are also worried about having access to healthcare in case they do fall ill. The hardest thing, according to the youth respondents, is the insecurity. Four of every ten (40 percent) of the respondents report that not being able to socialise is the most difficult. For

nearly one-third of respondents (28 percent) the increased amount of household work is the hardest. Twenty-three percent say that not being able to see a doctor for something other than COVID-19 is a major difficulty. This points to the over-strained health system in the context of the pandemic, and the fact that many healthcare providers have closed their doors. Two of every ten (20 percent) of the respondents say that the biggest challenge is not having adequate finances to pay their bills.

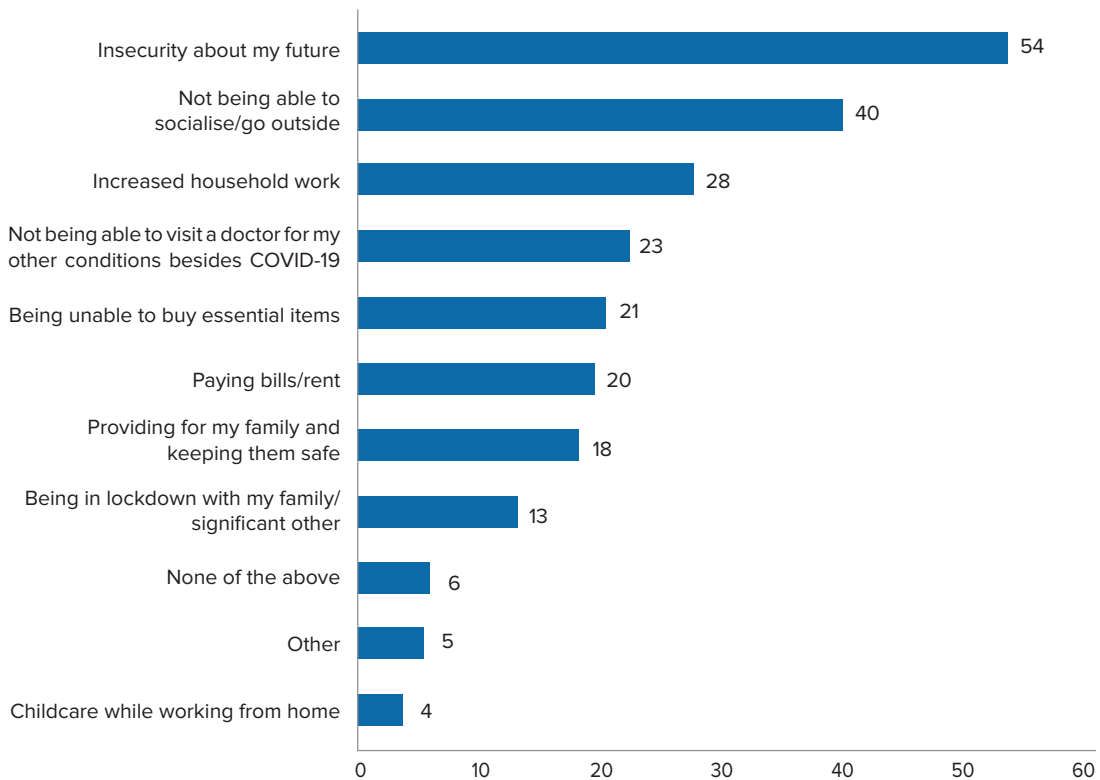


FIGURE 32: THE HARDEST THING FOR ME RIGHT NOW IS (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT AS RESPONDENTS WERE ABLE TO SELECT MORE THAN ONE ANSWER OPTION.

Following worries about getting sick, 54 percent of the respondents report being worried about an economic recession. One-quarter of the respondents report being worried about losing their job, and 37 percent say they are worried about not having enough money.

Social concerns are also abundant: 43 percent of the respondents worry that they will not be able to lead a normal life after the lockdown; 21 percent are worried about their social life; and 17 percent about the impacts of the lockdown on their romantic life.

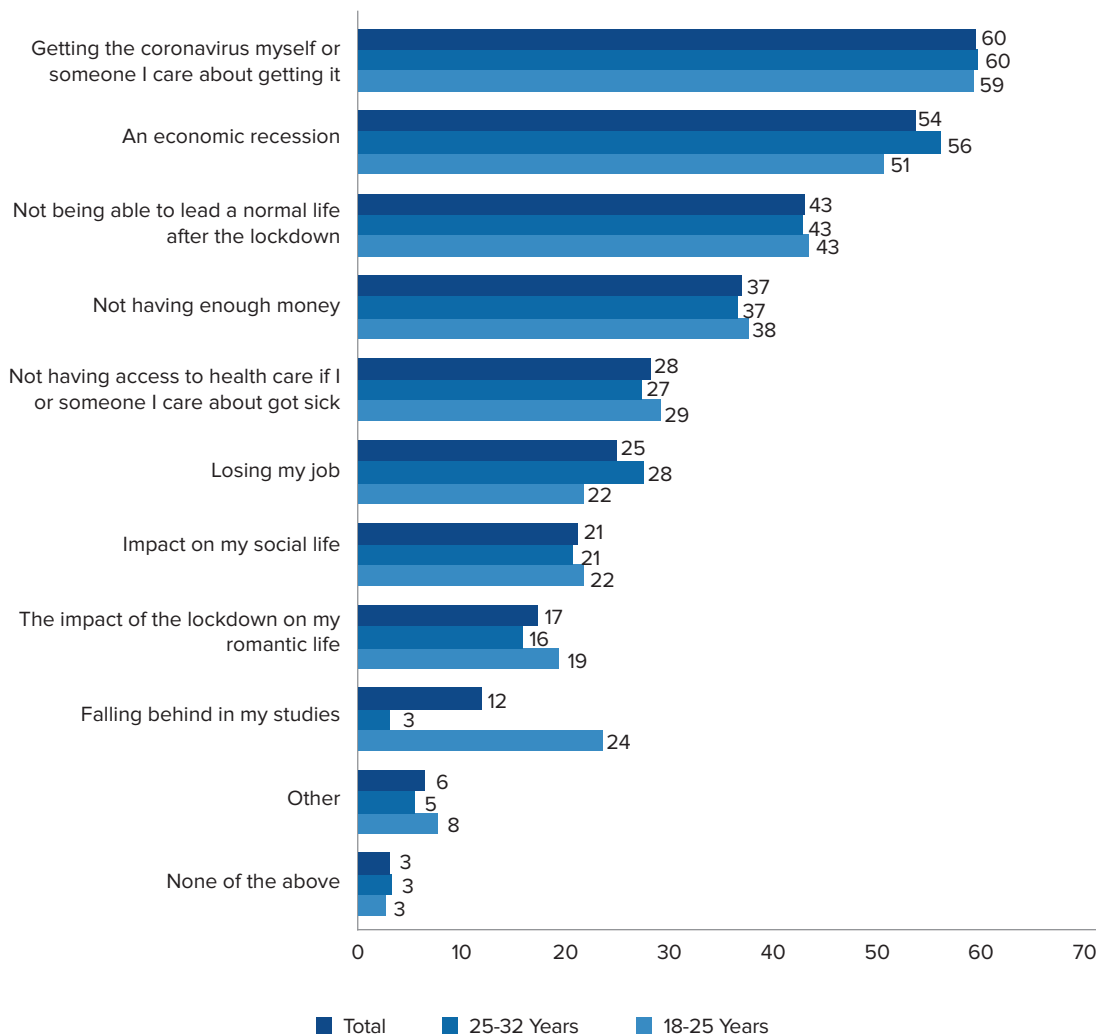
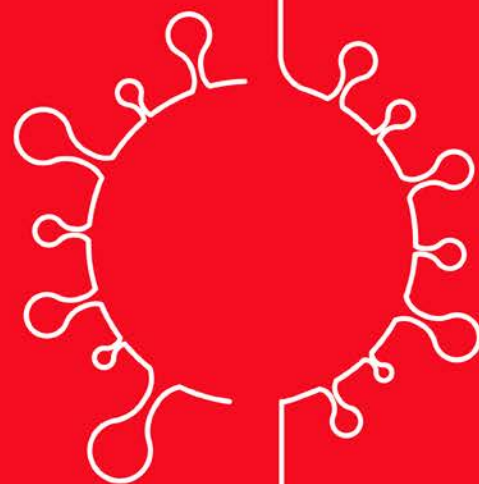


FIGURE 33: WHAT ARE YOU MOST WORRIED ABOUT? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE HUNDRED PERCENT AS RESPONDENTS WERE ABLE TO SELECT MORE THAN ONE ANSWER OPTION.

COVID-19
PREVENTION



INDIA
**STAY
HOME**
AND SAVE LIVES



SECTION 5

GOVERNANCE AND TRUST

Trust in government will be a key determinant in the efficacy of India's response to the pandemic. Furthermore, successful pandemic management in a country of 1.3 billion people will also hinge on the strict adherence to prevention and safety guidelines. This is only possible with widespread access to accurate information.

With this in mind, the youth lockdown survey asked

respondents about their views on the availability and sources of information during the lockdown. It also asked respondents their views on the necessity of the lockdown and whether they are following official guidelines. Moreover, the respondents were asked to gauge their level of trust in the government in responding to the crisis. Finally, the survey asked respondents to comment on what they think is most needed right now to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

The pandemic has been marked by an onslaught of information and misinformation, often making it difficult to follow proper safety precautions.³¹ Across the cities surveyed, 87 percent of the respondents feel that they have enough accurate information about COVID-19, how it spreads,

and how to stay safe. There are differences, however, in youth assessments of the availability of accurate information by city. Nearly one-third (27 percent) of the respondents in Kolkata report feeling they do not have sufficient information.

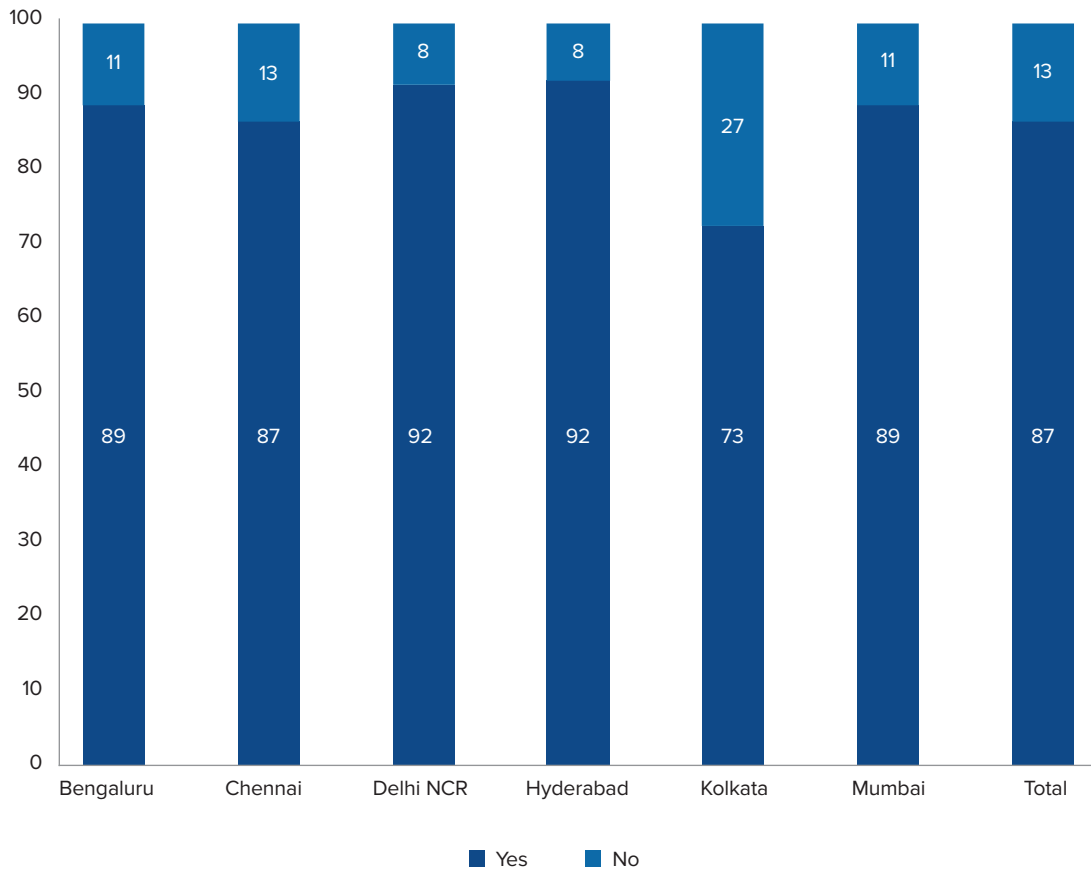


FIGURE 34: DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU HAVE ENOUGH ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS, HOW IT SPREADS AND HOW TO STAY SAFE? (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

During the crisis, respondents have turned to non-government sources of information, with 36 percent following private media houses and 30 percent following foreign health

organisation websites. Just five percent of the respondents say that their main source of information is foreign media.

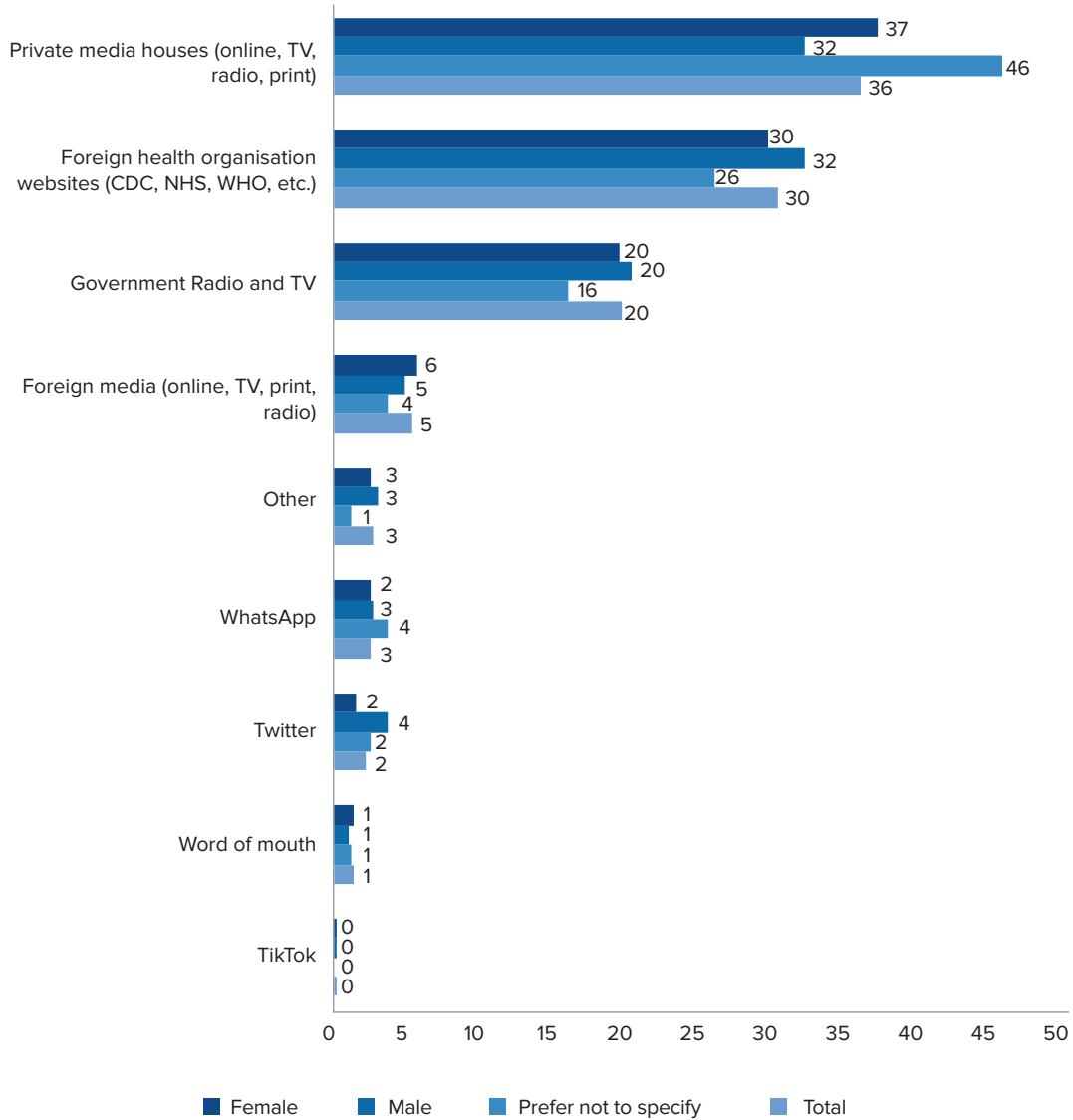


FIGURE 35: WHAT IS YOUR MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION REGARDING THE CORONAVIRUS? (%)

Respondents confirmed earlier findings that the population has a relatively high level of trust in medical advice from health workers and the government.³² Despite government sources being the third highest source of information on the pandemic, 72 percent of respondents report that if someone in their household exhibited

symptoms of the coronavirus they would first call the state helpline. One in every ten (10 percent) of the respondents say they would call a doctor, nine percent say they would quarantine at home, seven percent say they would go to the hospital, and just two percent say they do not know what they are supposed to do.

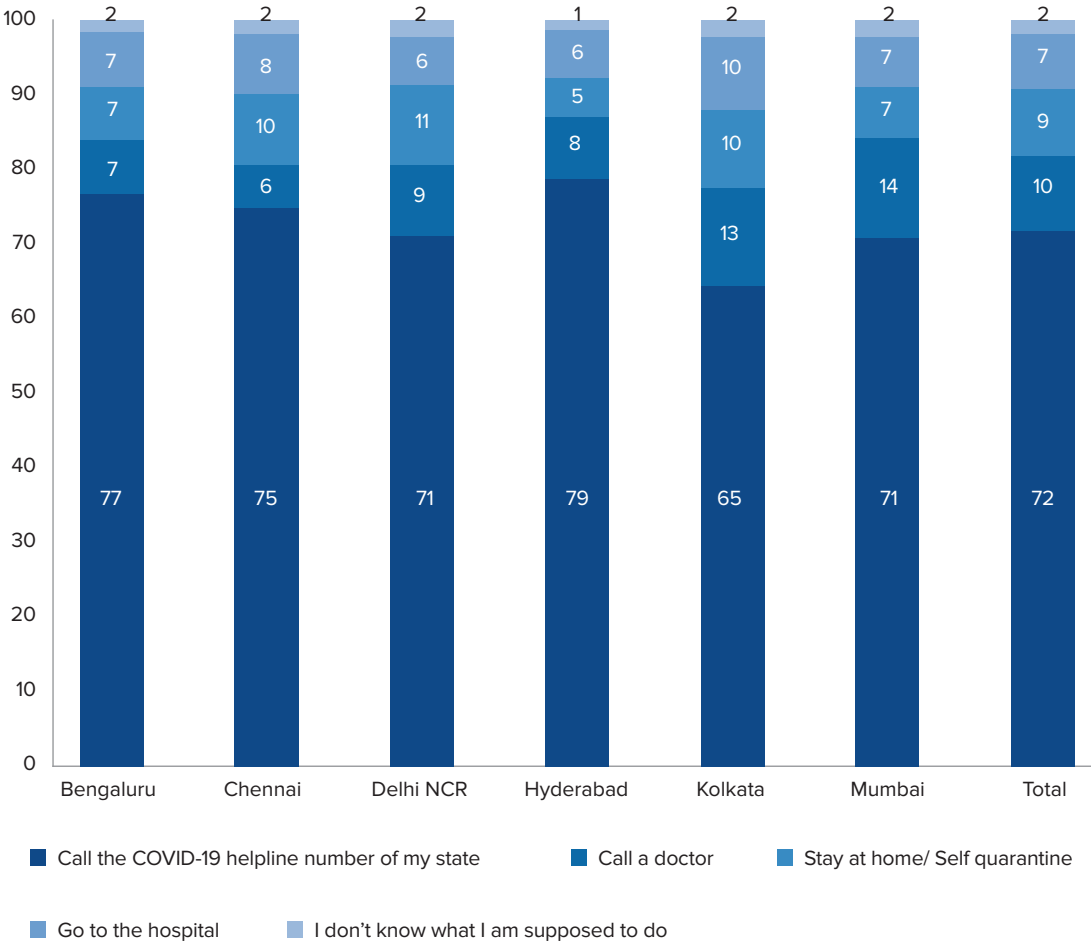


FIGURE 36: IF I OR SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD EXHIBITED SYMPTOMS OF THE CORONAVIRUS I WOULD: (%)

NOTE: RESPONSES MAY NOT ADD UP TO ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT BECAUSE OF ROUNDING.

Respondents are in agreement about the necessity of the lockdown for keeping people safe and reducing the spread of the virus. Overall, 96 percent of the respondents think the lockdown was necessary.

Following the view that the lockdown was necessary for preventing the spread of the virus, 93 percent of the respondents say that they have followed the guidelines.

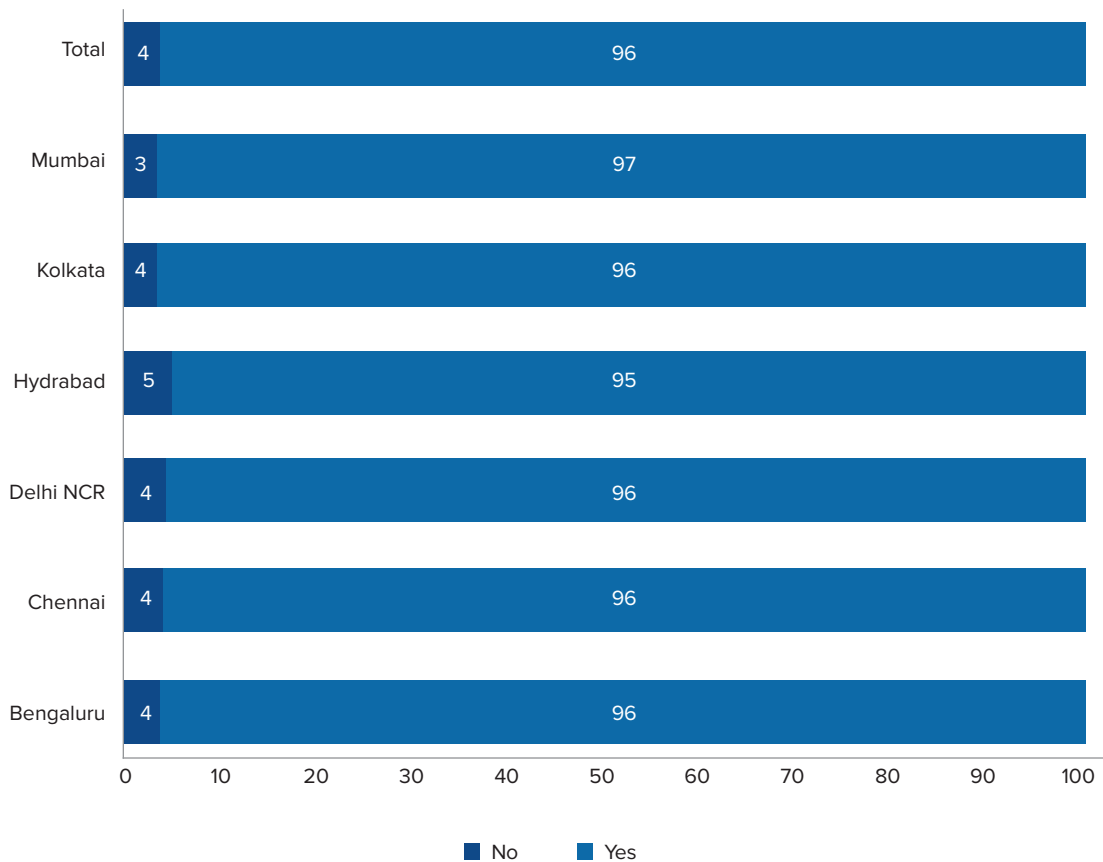


FIGURE 37: DO YOU THINK THE LOCKDOWN IS NECESSARY FOR REDUCING THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS? (%)

Trust in the government's ability to respond effectively to the crisis is high: 39 percent of the respondents say that they strongly agree with the following statement: "I trust the Government in addressing the coronavirus." 13 percent say that they *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with the same statement. Trust in the

Government's ability to deal with the crisis is lowest in Kolkata, where 22 percent of respondents *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. Somewhat surprisingly, 46 percent of respondents in Mumbai – the city that hardest hit, at the time of writing this report, by the pandemic—*strongly agree*.

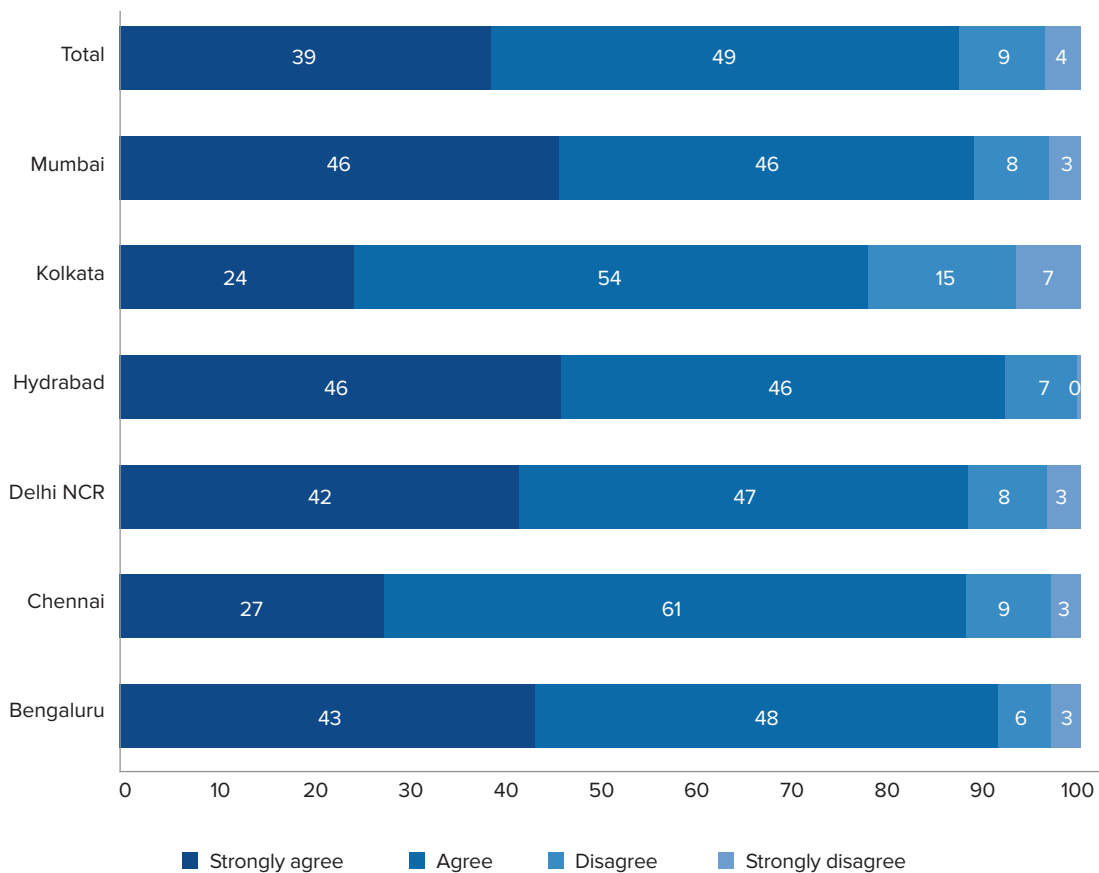


FIGURE 38: HOW MUCH DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT: I TRUST THE GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING THE CORONAVIRUS. (%)

The response to the pandemic has been diverse, with each country offering a unique response. Some countries' responses can offer India lessons in managing its domestic outbreak. When asked

which countries India should take lessons from, respondents turned towards East Asia, and are of the opinion that India should look towards South Korea, China and Japan.

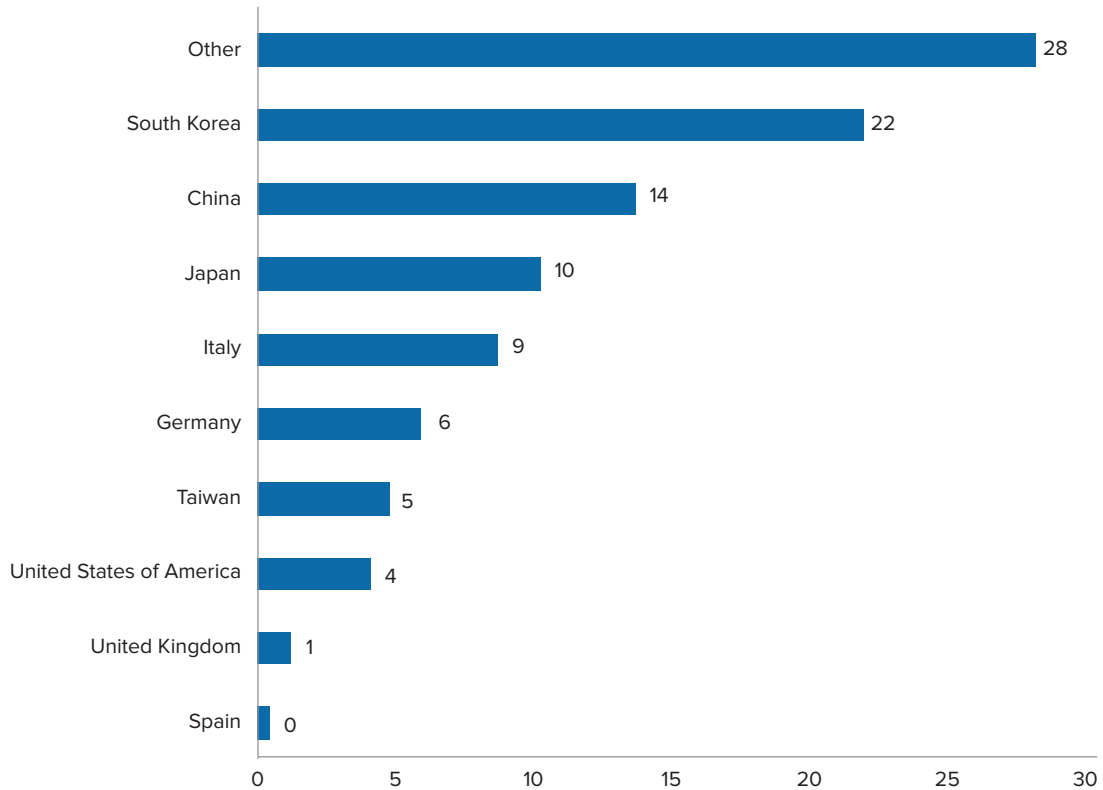


FIGURE 39: WHICH COUNTRY DO YOU THINK INDIA SHOULD TAKE LESSONS FROM IN FIGHTING THE CORONAVIRUS? (%)

Access to basic necessities and more testing are the two areas that respondents say more government action is needed right now. Despite an ongoing international debate about the trade-

offs of opening the economy and the potential impacts on people's health, just 12 percent of youth view the economy as the main area that needs attention right now.

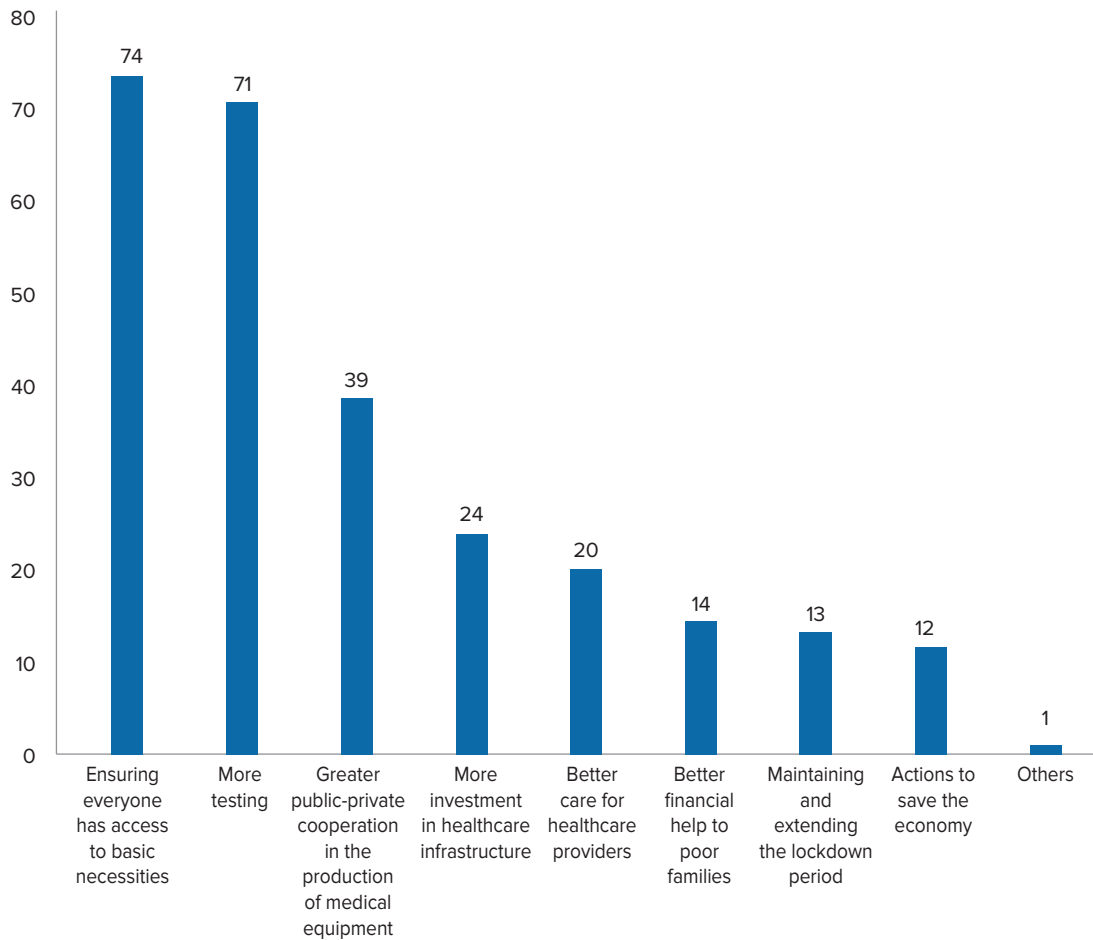


FIGURE 40: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS MOST NEEDED FROM THE GOVERNMENT RIGHT NOW? (%)

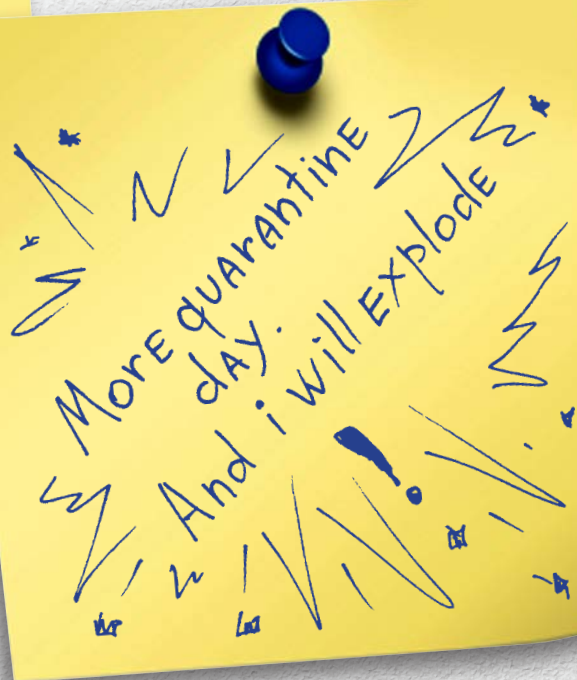
MEET ME ?
ONLINE ?



Party online



More quarantine
day.
And i will explode



SECTION 6

CONCLUSION

This study set out to understand the implications of India's lockdown—one of the world's strictest—on the country's youth. Although the sample size of 4,599 is not representative of the country's entire urban youth population, the findings offer a policy-relevant glimpse into the impacts of the lockdown.

India's lockdown imposed extraordinary and unprecedented restrictions on movement, and in turn forced entire systems to close or go virtual. While India's largest cities have the highest internet penetration rates in the country, considerable

parts of the populations have not yet made the digital transition.³³ As schools remain shut for the foreseeable future, addressing the potentially increasing gaps in learning outcomes is a must. Disparities in internet access, access to devices, and spaces for learning, along with different capacities and resources among teachers are threatening to foment even greater inequality.

Moreover, the lockdown has accelerated the trend towards remote work which was already underway in India before the pandemic. As the economy begins to re-open, some of the workplace

changes seen in the previous weeks are likely to remain. Ensuring that remote and digital working solutions are equitable, sustainable, and will protect the rights and wellbeing of workers should be a priority for employers and the state.

The pandemic has thrown light on the dismal state of social protections in India. Just 19 percent of the population is covered by health insurance,³⁴ and most social security programs cover only the formal sector workers, who account for just 10 percent of the workforce. The lack of access to health insurance, paid sick leave and unemployment insurance among most workers in India are likely to hinder the nation's response and recovery from the crisis. Times of upheaval present opportunities for change, and new social protection frameworks are needed that ensure universal healthcare, and greater social protection coverage.

Like in many other countries that have experienced strict confinement measures, India's youth are experiencing feelings of fear, loneliness and mental anguish. The mental health impacts of the ongoing crisis and lockdown measures are real.³⁵ The economic and emotional stress coupled with restrictions on movement have also led to rising cases of domestic violence around the world. It is important to underscore the negative mental health impact on gender minorities, which has been exhibited through the survey and require further analysis.

The pandemic necessitates rapid and drastic reform in India's mental health response. India must build on the momentum following the adoption of mental health legislation in 2017, and as pledged, guarantee treatment to those suffering from mental illness. Taking cognisance of the impending digital transition, it must also build the capacities of psychiatrists and other mental health professionals to adapt to the virtual

space, and simultaneously provide ease of access to those who are seeking help. Policymakers must work with community-led initiatives and build their capacities to prevent its own public health infrastructure from becoming overburdened. It must work with education institutions and companies to inculcate mental health guidelines within its human resource framework.

The government has largely gained the trust of India's urban youth in responding effectively to the crisis. As the virulence of the pandemic increases, the possibilities of more lockdowns exist, and lessons can be drawn from current experiences to help the country prepare for those that will follow.

The following paragraphs summarise the key findings of this study:

Remote learning is still remote for many: One-third of the respondents have not been able to continue their studies during the lockdown. A majority (69 percent) of the respondents confirmed that their educational institutions have made provisions for them. However, many students will struggle, due to the lack of available hardware – just 11 percent of households have a computer,³⁶ quiet spaces to learn, and capacity and resources for their teachers and education institutions.

Many youth are sitting idle: A quarter of employed respondents are sitting idle as their job does not permit remote working. Sixteen percent of youth report that their work hours have been reduced, 14 percent say that their wages have been cut, and seven percent say that they have been forced to take unpaid leave. Five percent of respondents say that they have lost their job because of the crisis. As businesses begin to re-open and life slowly starts to return to the streets, the impacts on employment will likely be long-lasting.

Social Protections – Family First: While just 31 percent of employed youth have health insurance, 66 percent of respondents think that they would have adequate access to healthcare if they needed it right now. This is revealing of the nature of social insurance in India, which depend heavily on family. Similarly, despite widespread disruptions to global supply chains and shortages of medical equipment and hospital beds, *91 percent of respondents* are optimistic about the availability and accessibility of basic necessities.

Feeling Down in the Lockdown – Seeking Digital Lights: More than one-third (37 percent) of the respondents say that they feel their mental health has been strongly affected by the lockdown. Even though 71 percent of the respondents are spending the lockdown with their family, 65 percent stated that they are either *lonely* or *very lonely*. More alarmingly, 21 percent of youth respondents say that they do not feel safe from physical and emotional harm at home during the lockdown. During these times of uncertainty, India's youth are turning online for entertainment and connection. Seventy-eight percent of youth are keeping themselves occupied with activities such as listening to music, reading, listening to podcasts, watching series and watching movies. Furthermore, 20 percent of youth respondents

report becoming part of a new digital community during the lockdown.

The Information Universe: India's youth feel that they have sufficient accurate information: Information campaigns seem to be working with regard to how people should respond if someone in their household gets sick. *Seventy-two percent of youth respondents said that they would call the state helpline if someone in their household exhibited symptoms of COVID-19. Moreover, 87 percent of respondents reported feeling that they have enough accurate information on COVID-19, how it spreads, and how to stay safe.* Youth are primarily relying on non-government news sources such as private domestic media, and foreign and international health organisation websites such as WHO and the CDC.

In Government we Trust: Youth are optimistic about the government's ability to respond effectively to the pandemic, with *88 percent of the respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement: I trust the Government in addressing the coronavirus.* Furthermore, the respondents agree with the government's lockdown measures, with *96 percent of them saying that they view the lockdown as a necessary measure.*

ENDNOTES

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