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Effects of COVID-19 on nutrition in Bihar

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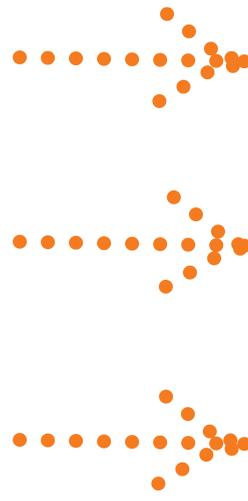
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EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON NUTRITION IN BIHAR



Half of the households in Bihar reported food shortage in the past month, causing most of them to reduce food intake; overall, three out of five reported reduced food intake.

Support from government nutrition schemes such as take-home ration for pregnant women and small children, and mid-day meals for school-going children need to improve the coverage.

Food shortage during the lockdown and the consequent reduction in food intake were reported more commonly by marginalised populations and people who lost income than others. Income support or opportunities for these groups may be prioritised.

BACKGROUND

- An extended nationwide lockdown and resulting stoppage of economic activities caused a substantial loss of income for many families. One of the significant implications of that is a food shortage in households, reducing food intake. This nutrition shock may hit females harder than males due to the deep-rooted gendered culture prevalent in India.
- This study's key objectives are to understand the extent of food shortage in households, any change in food intake, and coverage of government nutrition schemes.

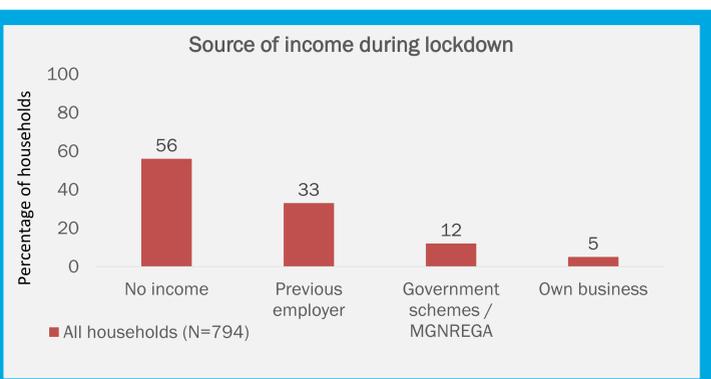
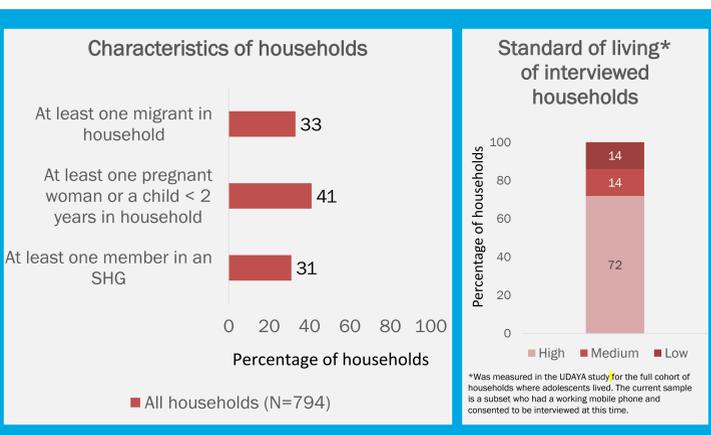
METHODS

- Data was gathered between May 13–22, 2020 from an existing study cohort of households under the UDAYA (www.projectudaya.in).
- Interviews were conducted with a total of 794 participant households enrolled in the study.
- Respondents: Young boys/girls participants who consented to participate in future surveys under UDAYA were contacted. Of 794, 87% were direct participants of UDAYA study, and the remaining were adult members from the same household.

PROFILE OF HOUSEHOLDS SURVEYED

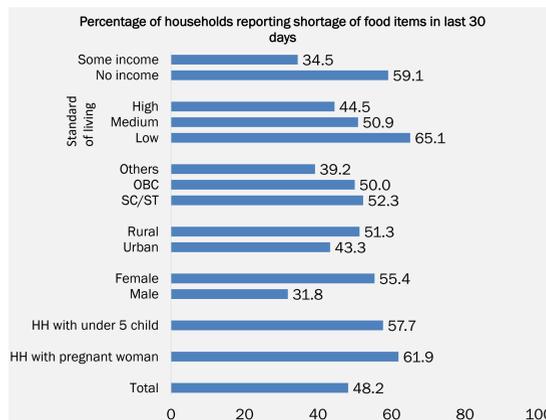
Profile of study respondents:

- Young (<25 years) : 86%; Males – 31%; Females - 69%; Currently married – 54%; Caste: Scheduled caste/tribe (SC/ST) - 16%, Other backward castes (OBC) – 64%, General caste – 20%.



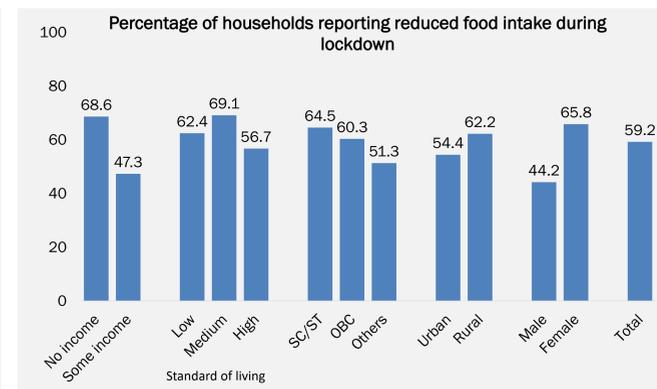
Note: The phone survey sample consists of those in UDAYA SDG cohort currently with a working phone number when attempts were made to reach them during lockdown. There is thus a possibility of a bias in the sample towards households with higher standard of living.

IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON FOOD INTAKE IN HOUSEHOLD

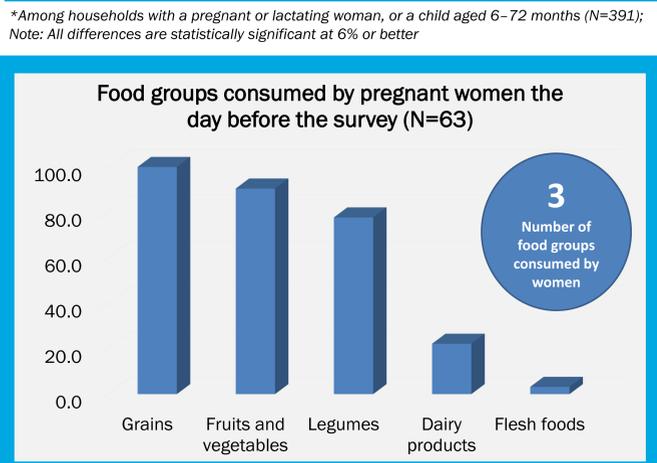
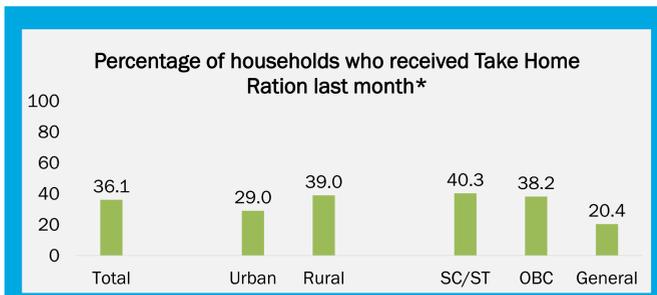
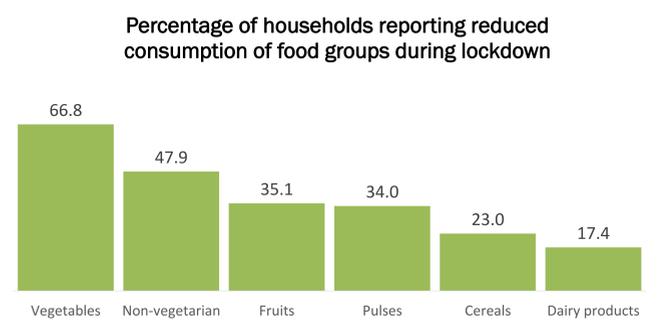


Notes: All differences are statistically significant at 5% or better; The question on income: What is the source of income of the family during the lockdown?

- 1/2 (48.2%, 95% CI: 44.8, 51.7)** households reported food shortage in past month; higher among households with pregnant women, under 5 year old children, rural, marginalised, economically weaker households and those with lost income.
- 1/2** of females versus **1/3** of males reported shortage of food and reduced intake.
- 3/5 (59.2%, 95% CI: 55.8, 62.6)** households reported reduced food intake during lockdown; higher among rural, marginalised, economically weaker households and those who lost income.
- 9/10** households compromised in consumption of vegetables or flesh foods.
- 1/3 (36.1%, 95% CI: 31.3, 40.8)** eligible households received take home ration in the past month; slightly higher among rural and marginalised households.
- Three out of five (Mean 2.9, 95% CI: 2.8, 3.1)** recommended food groups were consumed by pregnant women on the day before the survey; least likely to consume dairy products and flesh foods.
- 1/3 (29%, 95% CI: 22.2, 35.7)** households with a child aged 6–14 years reported receiving cash in lieu of mid-day meals.
- Receiving cash in lieu of mid-day meal was equally reported by eligible households in both rural and urban areas; however, higher proportion of males (35%) than females (26%) reported so.



Notes: All differences are statistically significant at 5% or better; the question on income: What is the source of income of the family during the lockdown?



29% households with a child aged 6–14 reported receiving cash in lieu of mid-day meal due to school-going children (N=176)

LIMITATIONS

Although the study sample is a subset of the state-representative UDAYA SDG cohort of adolescents, the representative nature of the selection could not be retained because of differential phone ownership by adolescents from higher and lower economic strata, mobile number retention/portability, etc. As mentioned in the Method section, the sample is biased towards households with a higher standard of living. The results may thus be interpreted with caution.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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