

Social Norms Surrounding COVID-19 Protective Behaviours

A 2-part study exploring social norms around protective behaviours – a qualitative study in 2 low-income urban settlements in Mumbai and online surveys across Delhi, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra.

Perceptions of the Community

Threat Perception:

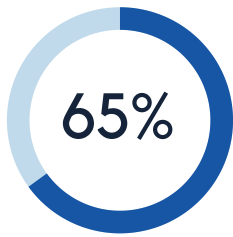
Community members do not fear contracting the disease or do not believe that they are at risk.

Fear of Economic Impact:

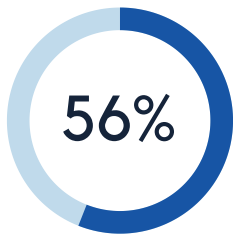
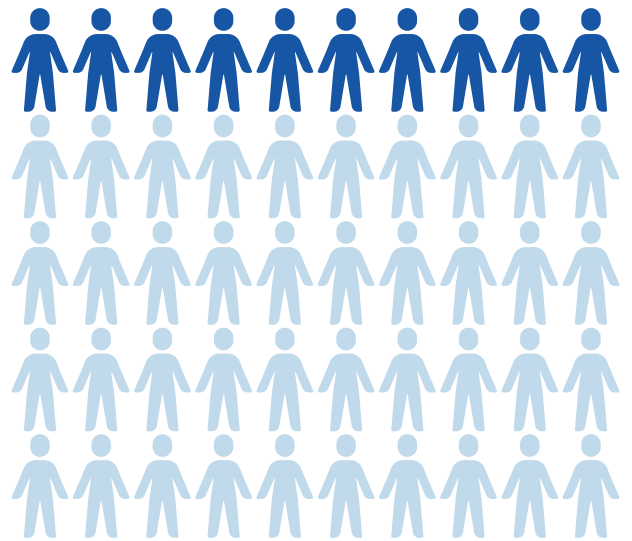
Community members fear the economic impact of the lockdown on their livelihoods.

Trust in the Government:

Many community members believe that the COVID-19 pandemic is merely a rumor and the lockdown has been enforced to further oppress marginalised groups.



of respondents said that people did not follow the behaviours because of lack of awareness



of respondents in the online survey said that maintaining physical distancing was the most difficult behaviour to follow.

Rigid social and gender norms prevent men from engaging in protective behaviours out of fear of being called “weak” or “feminine”.

People live in cramped homes with large families. Staying home for long periods is uncomfortable.

Barriers to Protective Behaviours

People are unaware of the relationship between COVID-19 and spitting.

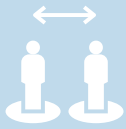
The community is deemed safe if there are no positive cases, and social distancing is not seen as necessary. Distancing rules are seen as necessary only in spaces outside the community.

Discomfort in breathing while wearing a mask (especially in hot, humid weather) leads people to believe that masks are neither healthy nor effective.

Severe scarcity of water in the communities leads to heavy rationing of available water for more urgent requirements.

The general hygiene level is poor in the communities (some settlements are on dumping grounds) people are not specifically concerned with spitting.

Social Distancing



Mask Wearing



Hand Washing



No Spitting



Implementing the 4R Model in the New Normal

R1 Responsibility
Most effective when done by influential people in the community. Likely to work only if there are consequences to non-compliance

R2 Remind
Most effective when done by influential people in the community
Likely to work only if there are consequences to non-compliance

R2

R3 Reprimand
Likely to work for public behaviours like mask-wearing and social distancing but not private behaviours like hand washing.
Unlikely to work for behaviours where there is high public acceptance, like spitting

R3

R4 Respectfully
Since there is a high risk of situations turning aggressive, reminders and reprimands have to be conveyed respectfully with polite language, using titles of respect

R4