



Inferential Survey Statistics and Research Foundation

CIN - U73100DL2019NPL346012 TAN - DELI14129D

Statistical Support to Informed Decision Making
Since 2019

Date: 11 June 2020

PRESS BRIEF

Inferential Survey Statistics and Research Foundation (ISS&RF) has been formed by a group of highly spirited, well-informed retired officers of Indian Statistical Service, Indian Economic Service, Subordinate Statistical Service and other services, each having led the statistical systems across the Ministries/ Departments of the Government at senior level for several decades. It has the expertise in statisticians, economists, information technology and subject field expertise and are engaged in independent statistical surveys and high-quality research in the areas of survey methodology, quantitative analysis, training, and related fields of applied statistics.

2. The report “Old and Poor in the time of Covid-19 Pandemic in India: A Case Study of Old Age Pension Schemes” is its maiden survey-based study conducted out of its own CSR funds.

3. The first Covid-19 bound ‘lockdown’ of 21 days (beginning with 25th March 2020) was announced by the Government on 24th March 2020. Along with this, four months advance payment of pensions under pension schemes of IGNOAPS and MBPOAP were delivered to beneficiaries at their respective villages/wards/Gram *Panchayat* (GP) in Odisha between 4th week of March 2020 to 1st week of April 2020. The study was mainly to capture information from the beneficiaries regarding their expenditure pattern and whether such lump-sum payment in one instalment was to their advantage or disadvantage. Secondly, since the poor old people are also the most vulnerable section in so far as Covid-19 pandemic attack is concerned, through this study, an attempt was made to gather information regarding their health status and the preventive measures that they have been following for the safety of their health during this period.

Telephonic survey in all the 30 districts of Odisha was conducted during the period 1st May 2020 to 20th May 2020 covering 1071 sample of IGNOAPS and MBPOAP beneficiaries. The summaries of findings are:

4. Chronic Diseases:

- Incidences of chronic diseases in the family of the respondents as well as amongst the beneficiaries are found to be substantial. 10.46% of total sample families have members other than the beneficiaries who suffer from at least one listed chronic disease and beneficiaries themselves are concerned, 4.20% beneficiaries have multiple chronic diseases and 22.88% have single chronic disease.
- In case of the beneficiaries, the common chronic diseases are - Hypertension/Blood Pressure (BP)- 48.78%, followed by Diabetes/Sugar- 19.51% and Chronic (long-term) respiratory disease-13.94%.



5. Awareness about Guidelines to prevent Covid19:

- Feedback from respondents (old and poor) without prompt shows that the three most important measures that they are aware of to be followed to avoid spread of Covid-19 are 'Staying at home', 'Maintaining social distance' and 'Wearing Mask'.
- Despite massive propagandas by government machinery, the messages regarding Covid19, especially its preventive measures, have not reached the people to the desired extent. Awareness amongst beneficiaries (with prompt) has been observed to be in the range of only 37.25% with respect to 'Prohibition of congregation of more than 5 persons' to 59.66% with respect to 'Working from home'. Even regarding the most common measures like 'Staying in home', 'Maintaining social distance' and 'Wearing mask', only 47.81%, 51.91% and 57.24% respectively of the beneficiaries have informed their awareness and that too with prompt.
- Low level of awareness and violation of the government instructions like practice of staying in home was found to be as high as 40.52% amongst the old age persons i.e. within 15 days prior to the date of interview. 35.48% beneficiaries have also reported 3 to 4 days of moving out of home and 14.29% reported 5 to 6 days of moving out of home during 15 days prior to the survey. Moving out of home decreases with regard to beneficiaries of higher age groups.

6. Government Assistance:

- More than 95% of the beneficiaries surveyed confirmed receipt of the advance pension.
- It was observed that percentage of beneficiaries located in urban areas and under MBPOAP who received pension (97.30% & 97.43% respectively) was higher than their counter parts in rural areas and under IGNOAPS (94.19% & 94.11% respectively). Despite this discrepancy, feedbacks from few citizens and public representatives suggest that all the targeted beneficiaries must have received the pension over time.
- In addition to advance old age pension, targeted beneficiaries also received various assistances during the lockdown period like free ration under PDS (44.82% of beneficiary got rice and 6.54% wheat), lump sum cash assistance (62.93%) and credit in *Jan Dhan* account (12.14%).
- However, only about 45% of the families of OAP have received food grain free of cost, which should have been 100%.

7. Spending Pattern:

- The largest portion of the amount received as advance pension has been spent by the beneficiaries in the first few weeks after receiving it. It is found that 38.10% of beneficiaries have fully spent the advance pensions received by them in the first few weeks immediately after the receiving date. 81% to 99% of advance received have been spent by 17.18% of beneficiaries and 61% to 80% by 20.45% of beneficiaries.



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- While the most vulnerable families having old persons only as members and those having separate hearth/*chulla* spent much less out of advance pension (₹1707.76 and ₹1507.14 respectively), spending by families having old/adult as members and old/adult/child as members was comparatively higher i.e. ₹1846.31 and ₹1909.06 respectively. This is probably due to limited source of income and livelihood opportunities of families in the 1st category in comparison to the 2nd category.
- Expenditure on food grains/pulses (rice, wheat, dal, etc), grocery (edible/non-edible oil, salt, sugar, toiletry, etc.) and medicine (including medical tests) are generally the broad categories and most important items of expenditure, which workout to 43.89%, 26.14% and 14.15% respectively for all the beneficiaries of pension schemes. A good 14.15% of the beneficiaries have incurred expenditure out of pension for medical purposes may imply that old age pension is not only the source for them to fall back upon to meet such expenditure, but also incurring such expenditure as an inevitable tradeoff between survival and subsistence living.
- Expenditure pattern shows that the most vulnerable among the poor/old i.e. families having Old member(s) only and families with old member, adults and children with separate hearth/*chulla*, have greater but nearly similar tendency for spending proportionately more on food-grains/pulses, which was noticed to be 44.95% and 45.68% for the respective categories compared to the families of pension holders who live with adults and those with both adults and children under same roof and have food from common hearth/*chulla*. These later two categories of families have been noticed to have spent a lesser proportion of their pension i.e. 38.58% and 34.58% respectively on food-grains /pulses.

8. Based on the findings of this survey we are prompted to conclude that the awareness campaign of the government on Covid-19 is not only reaching a few susceptible people but also the instructions are violated rampantly by them. Secondly, the advance payments of old age pensions to the targeted beneficiaries have been fully or mostly spent within few weeks. The findings establish the hypothesis of the study that people, irrespective of their economic status tend to spend more if they have more which may not augur well for the old and poor during a crisis period like lockdown as it may ultimately result in their livelihood crisis. It may be more appropriate to extend such assistance more in kind and less in terms of cash during crisis. **Perhaps combination of ex-gratia cash assistance, which was given and assistance in kind, could have served the purpose by sticking to the ongoing monthly timeline of releasing pension to the old age people.**
