

**Timeline**

May-July 2020

**Study Type**

Pilot

**Article Link**

<https://behavioraldevlab.org/projects/project.html?projectId=10>

**Research Implemented by IPA**

No

# The Effects of the Lockdown on Temporary Migrants in India

## Researchers

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## Abstract

This study aims to assess the short- and medium-term impact of Covid-19 on a particularly vulnerable and large but difficult to reach population in India: temporary migrants. Building on a sample of urban migrants from a previous study, we will conduct phone surveys to understand the economic and health effects of the current lockdown. The sample includes both migrants stranded in the city and others who managed to return to their villages. We plan to extend the sample with snowball sampling, encouraging current participants to recruit additional participants. Thanks to an existing infrastructure, we are able to start surveys immediately and disseminate information promptly to policymakers.

## Project Outcomes of Interest

This survey will collect information about participant and household demographics; current location; economic outcomes (e.g. consumption, earnings, the functioning of the shadow economy in villages); health (e.g. beliefs about COVID—including potential misinformation, current health status, mental well-being, COVID prevention measures, and health behaviors); functioning of the social safety net (e.g. PDS access, services for stranded migrants); and household dynamics (e.g. reallocation of labor, “appropriate behaviors” and responses to the pandemic by gender, communication practices).

## Partners

[LEAD at Krea University \(IFMR\)](#)

## Link to Results

Final paper- December 2020

## Impact Goals

- Build resilience and protect the financial health of families and individuals
- Improve social-safety net responses

## Link to Public Data

[https://behavioraldevlab.org/policy\\_insights/ld\\_covid.html](https://behavioraldevlab.org/policy_insights/ld_covid.html)

## Implementing Organization

EPoD India at LEAD at Krea University (IFMR)

## Results Status

Results

## Results

We present a summary of the salient ways in which informal workers – who are disproportionately local migrants – have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns. This report is based on five rounds of household surveys conducted over the period of June - October 2020. The sample consists of male migrant daily-wage laborers primarily employed in construction recruited in Chennai but mostly from villages or towns in Tamil Nadu, and their wives. Participants attended a minimum of one round and a maximum of five rounds.

- First, migrants headed home towards family, villages, and native places from Chennai when the lockdown began, but then began heading back to Chennai by July. This trend of returning to the city continued to pick up speed in August. Almost 41% of the sample reported being in their native district in the month of May-June, which fell to 27% in the month of October. In the final round, conducted in October, researchers find 73% of the sample residing in Chennai.
- Second, employment was concerningly low during the months of May and June at almost 45%, however the month of October witnessed a transition to almost 87%. There was a significant change in employment status between rounds and the overwhelming

majority of this was towards seeking and finding work. Moving back to Chennai, marked a clear improvement in chances of employment and, likely, drove much of this trend. Among women, roughly 30% of the population found work after the lockdown.

- Third, most migrants have growing awareness of various COVID-19 precautions, though some report important barriers to taking necessary precautions. Guidelines such as wearing masks and washing hands are broadly considered important. However, there remains a level of fear associated with the pandemic and its uncertainty. About 45% of male participants report being very scared or terrified about this situation. There is also drop in mental health status for both men (by 4 points, SD 3.6) and women (by 2.9 points, SD 3.4) when comparing Cantril's ladder positions reported retrospectively by respondents to present well being status.
- Finally, stigma around travelling migrant population is seen to exist. When respondents were asked how they think migrants who travel back to natives from work places would be treated by people around them, on an average almost 63% answered that these migrants would be assumed to be ill.