

## **A PERCEPTION STUDY ON AIR QUALITY IN 17 INDIAN CITIES**

The Clean Air Collective, an unbranded network of civil society organisations, citizen groups and experts working on the issue of air pollution across India, commissioned CMSR consultants to conduct a perception study on air quality in 17 cities in India. The study covers cities with highly polluted air - Delhi NCR, Kolkata, Patna, Lucknow, Varanasi, Amritsar, Singrauli, Dhanbad, Raipur, Korba, Chandrapur, Angul, Nagpur, and cities becoming rapidly polluted – Bangalore, Pune, Mumbai and Chennai.

The study was designed to find out the level of awareness (cause, effect, precaution & solution) among people on the issue of air pollution. 5000 people were interviewed across different demographics.

### **Broadly the survey tried to capture the following;**

- If citizens are aware about the health impacts of polluted air.
- If citizens are aware of the actions being taken by the government and civil society organisations to mitigate it
- Awareness levels about the source of pollution in their city.
- Amongst the issues that affect them (social or environmental), where does air pollution figure on that list.
- What would trigger them to take personal action.
- What kind/ level of actions would they like to take on air pollution.
- Understand their current media source of information about Air Pollution.
- Who do they think should be responsible to take actions to reduce pollution in their city.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY**

- Across the cities, more than 90% of the people interviewed have heard of air pollution. Delhi has the highest levels of awareness and is closely followed by Chennai, Bangalore, Pune and Kolkata (all above 98%). Of the respondents 71% have heard about the issue from TV and radio, 52% social media and 49% print media.
- Air pollution is a household issue already and 78% of the people interviewed discussed air pollution at home. More women discussed it at home in comparison to men - 80% in comparison to 78%.

- However, there is low awareness of technical terms such as AQI, PM 2.5 and PM 10 at 54%, 29.6% 17.8% respectively. 31.5% had not heard of any of these terms. Awareness was higher in Tier 1/Metro cities with Delhi NCR leading the way for all the 3 terms. Only 35% of those who had heard of AQI understood what it meant.
- The top 2 sources of AQI information for the people who were aware and understood AQI or were just aware are Newspapers and mobile apps. Majority of the people (33.4%) from the 17 cities reported that they look up/access air quality information “sometimes” and 12% reported “never”. The survey also showed that the age group which “always” sought AQ information was 18-25 years.
- The top 3 sources from where people accessed information was sought were T.V (66.9%), Print Media (53.6%) and online (internet) (33.4%). Senior citizens depended most of the television while the young adults (18-25 years) relied on online sources to fetch information.
- 41.2% respondents felt that the air quality in their cities was “Unhealthy” followed by 31.3% who think its “Moderate”. About 10.6% people feel the AQ is “Toxic”. Of the people who categorised their city’s air as “Toxic”, majority of them belong to Patna, Delhi and Varanasi.
- 51% people feel that air quality has worsened. People who feel the air quality has become “much worse” belong to Angul, Delhi NCR, Lucknow and Patna, and people of Chennai, Raipur, Mumbai, Korba and Pune feel that it has become a “little worse”.
- The top 4 causes of deteriorating air quality were identified to be motor vehicles, (74%) Industrial units (58%), tree cutting (56.9%) and construction (48.2%).
- 85% respondents reported actually feeling sick or uncomfortable when the air quality worsens. The majority people who felt sick were below 18 years, closely followed by 36-45 and 46-60 years age group.
- 32% felt that air pollution affected them ‘to a large extent’ and 45% to some extent. Thus almost 80% of the people interviewed said that air quality affected the quality of their life.
- The top safeguard opted by people to avert the effects of air pollution is use of masks (43.2%). The uptake of masks is majorly observed in age group of 18-25 followed by 26-35 years.
- The top 3 environmental issues which affect personal health identified by people are air pollution (maximum at 46.4%), drinking polluted water (19.5%) and Global warming & Climate Change (12.2%).

- An average 31% people indicated that they are not aware of the actions taken by government/CSOs to curb air pollution and mitigate the negative impact of bad air quality and about 58% reported to be aware.
- The top 3 initiatives taken by people are Walking whenever possible (59.7%), Plantation to improve AQ (40.2%) and reduced energy consumption at homes (36.2%).
- Over all 85.5% respondents expressed interest in accessing more information on air quality.
- 32% of the people feel dissatisfied with action taken by government in controlling air pollution while 52.5% feel satisfied to some extent.
- More than 80% people agree that the government can launch the mass media campaign throughout the city by putting hoardings/banners in the city and advertising in Radio/TV to sensitise citizens about AQ
- More than 80% people agree that polluting companies should be fined as per provisions in the law and that there should be a complete ban polluted/old vehicles in the city.
- More than 80% people agreed that government should bring new and strict laws to mitigate and control air pollution, should encourage recycling programs and improve public transportation.
- More than 80% people agree that the government should put pressure on power stations and factories to switch to cleaner processes
- 64% agree that government should shut down polluting companies in the city even if it puts a few jobs at risk.