

News release: Maharashtra

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Maharashtra performs higher than all-India average on continuity in education during COVID-19 school closures: survey

A recent survey by policy think tanks LIRNEasia and ICRIER has shown that Maharashtra was able to ensure continuity in formal education for 38% of its school-going (enrolled) children during the COVID-19 lockdowns. The state compares well against the India national average, as well as that of NCT Delhi, whose performance stood at 20% and 25% respectively. It is also noteworthy that only 6% of households had at least one child dropping out of education, as opposed to the national average of 25%.

However, this still means that 62% of enrolled children (children from 59% of households with school aged children) did *not* have continuity in their formal education, or receive any educational services from their school or private tuition providers during the lockdown.

Maharashtra's relatively high levels of digital connectivity has clearly been an enabling factor in the provision of remote education, with 87% of households having internet access, or 55% of its population aged 15 and above being internet users - as compared to the all-India figures of 62% and 47%, respectively. Although NCT Delhi had similarly high levels of internet among its population it was not able to ensure similar levels of continuity for its school-aged population as did Maharashtra.

Another worrying aspect that the survey sheds light on is that even among those that *had* continuity in their education, the experience varied vastly in terms of the format and the level of interactivity between students and teachers. While many received education through more than one channel (e.g., live online lessons, instructions sent to smartphones or delivered home, etc.), those that had access to more channels were more likely to receive feedback than those with access to less. Such variations can in turn lead to disparities in educational outcomes even among those that did receive educational services during the closures.

The survey findings were released at a virtual launch event conducted on 12 November 2021, which included a panel discussion with leading government, private sector and civil society representatives. Panelists included Dr. Jaijit Bhattacharya (President, Centre for Digital Economy Policy Research), Abhishek Singh (President & CEO, National e-Governance Division, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology), Nishanth Baghel (Director of Technology Innovations, Pratham) and Helani Galpaya (CEO, LIRNEasia). The discussion was moderated by Dr. Rajat Kathuria (Senior Visiting Professor, ICRIER).

About the research: The research was conducted by LIRNEasia and ICRIER, and funded by IDRC through a joint grant given to three regional think tanks: LIRNEasia, Research ICT Africa and Instituto de Estudios Peruanos. The nationally representative sample for the survey consisted of 7,000 households across India including 350 villages and wards. The sampling methodology has been designed to ensure representation of the target group (population aged 15+) at a national level with a confidence level of 95-percent and a +/-1.7% margin of error. The data also allows for disaggregation by urban/rural divide, gender and socio-economic classification at the national level and at the state level for 4 focal states, Delhi, Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra -- the survey was conducted in 500 households in 25 wards in each of these states. The findings for these states are representative at a state level with a confidence level of 95-percent and a +/-6.2% margin of error.

About LIRNEasia: LIRNEasia is an Asia Pacific ICT policy and regulation think tank. Its mission is to catalyze policy change through research to improve people's lives in the emerging Asia Pacific by facilitating their use of hard and soft infrastructures through the use of knowledge, information and technology.

For more information see <https://lirneasia.net/>

About ICRIER: ICRIER is an autonomous economic policy think tank. ICRIER's main focus is to enhance the knowledge content of policy making by undertaking analytical research that is targeted at informing India's policy makers. The Digital Economy, Startup and Innovation (DESI) team at ICRIER is deeply invested in areas of digital access, internet governance and market competition.

For more information see <http://icrier.org/>

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