

Child
Perception
Survey

COVID - 19
CORONAVIRUS



Child Rights Governance & Child Protection
Bangladesh

IMPACT ON CHILDREN



Save the Children

INTRODUCTION

As we navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial that we keep our actions informed of the still evolving yet profound impact the crisis is having on children. Millions of children around the world are now out of school, living in a lockdown, many of them exposed to ever more threats of violence, neglect and abuse from stressed-out family members and online abusers. Children of Bangladesh are also faced with similar threats.

Since the lockdown, the health emergency has brought about a financial crisis, daily wage earners of the informal economy being the hardest hit with production and sales shuttered. For the children of these households, such loss of income for the poor meant further deprivation from health and education opportunities, intensified food insecurity, greater risks of child marriage and so on. Undoubtedly, the crisis have far reaching implications for children's physical and psychosocial wellbeing.

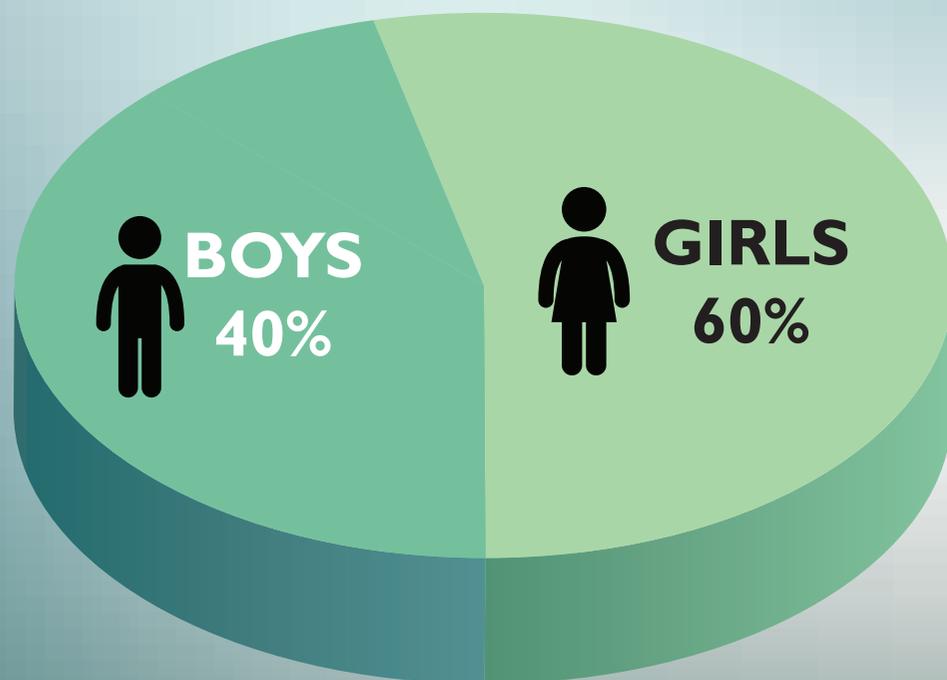
In our fight against the pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences, it is important that our actions are based on ground realities the children are faced with to be effectively responsive. And it is imperative that we listen directly from the children to understand their needs, fears, worries and struggles. This study is an attempt towards that end and made an effort to reach the most marginalized children to get their perceptions and better understand

the impact of the crisis on them. The study is aimed at - i) unravelling the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the most marginalized children of Bangladesh, and ii) strengthen GO-NGO strategies and actions by informing them with the realities of the children amidst the pandemic. The study, with a set of child-friendly questions, has reached over phone to 121 children, both girls and boys including children with disabilities who are aged between 10-18, from different marginalized communities including urban slums, tea gardens and deprived rural areas.

The findings show, among others, significant exposure of children to health risks despite reasonable information availability, drastic loss of income and livelihoods and severe food insecurity at the household level, discontinued education during the lockdown, increase in physical and humiliating punishment by family members, and worries of food, infection and death affecting children's psychosocial wellbeing.

RESPONDENTS

TOTAL REpondENTS 121

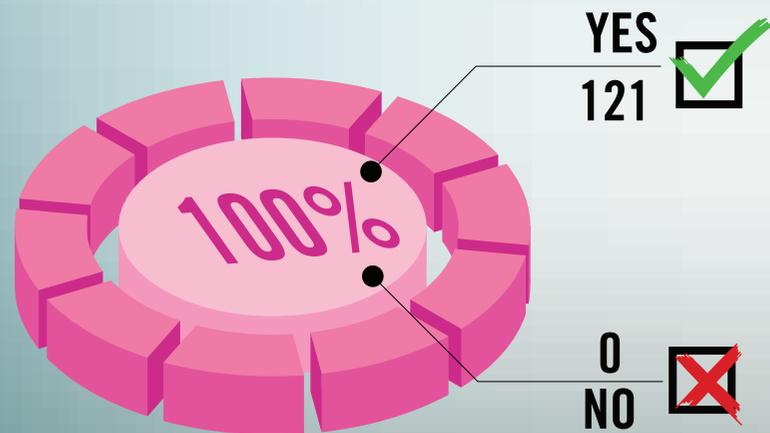


FINDINGS

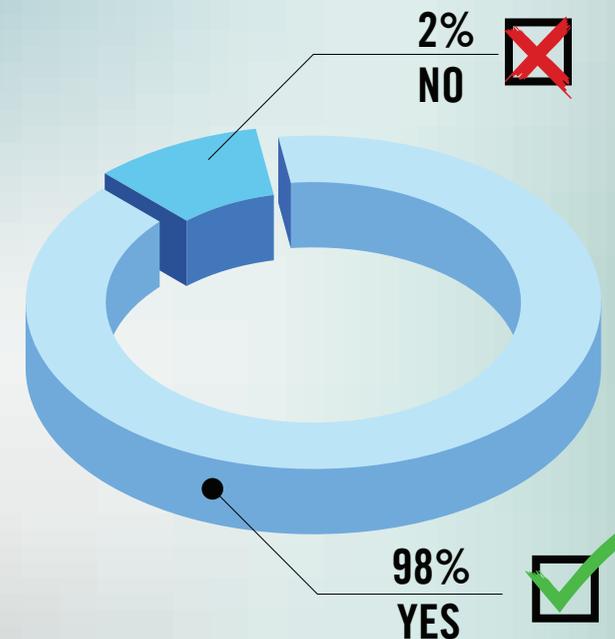
INFORMATION AND ATTITUDE

In order to keep the children safe from the health risk of COVID-19, it is important that they are provided with necessary information on the risks and safety measures. The children seem to have received the basic information about Corona Virus and safe practices.

Q. Do you know about Corona virus?



Q. Are you aware of precautionary measures against Corona infection?

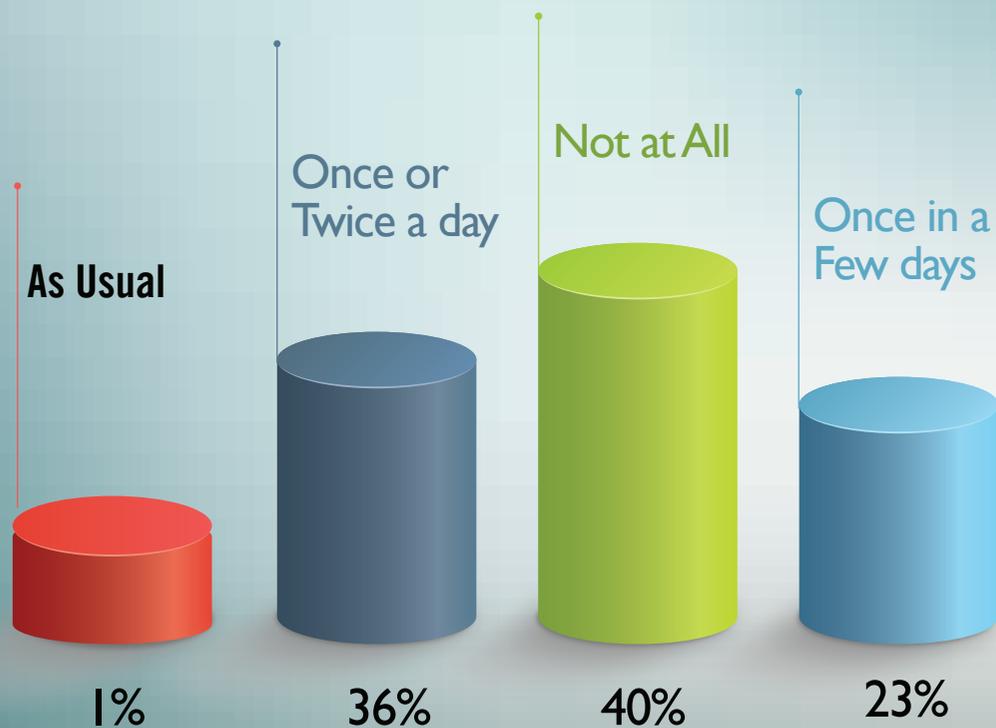


Only two of the respondent children said they do not know about the safety measures. Both of them are girls.

INFORMATION AND ATTITUDE

However, availability of information has not translated into changed behavior for everyone. Although 89% mentioned that going out is restricted in their area, 52% mentioned they are not completely at home, girls and boys alike.

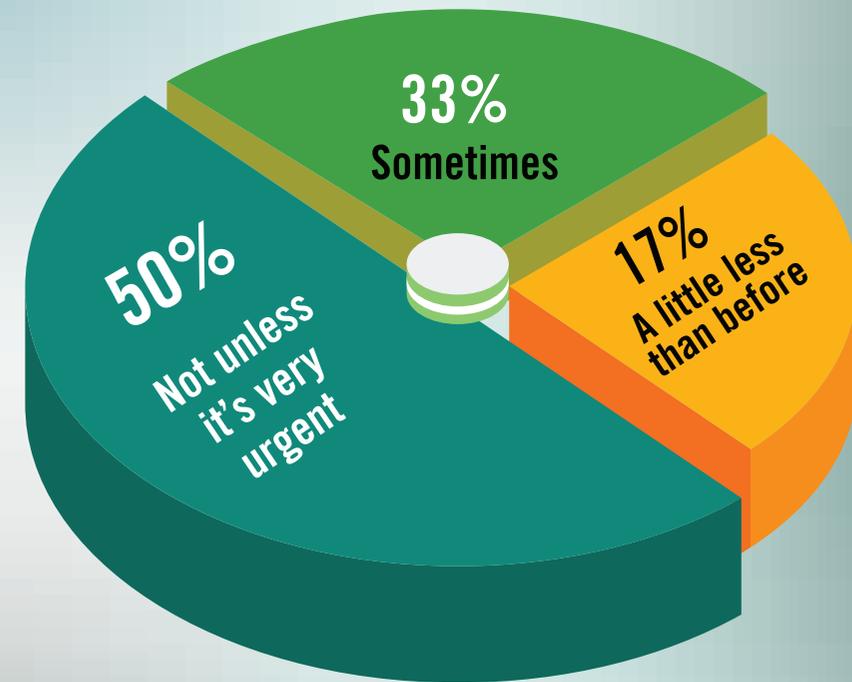
Q. Are you going outside often?



Working children are found to be the most exposed. Over 74% of them are still going out on a regular basis.

50% of the children also mentioned that grownups/parents are going out almost regularly, in different frequencies.

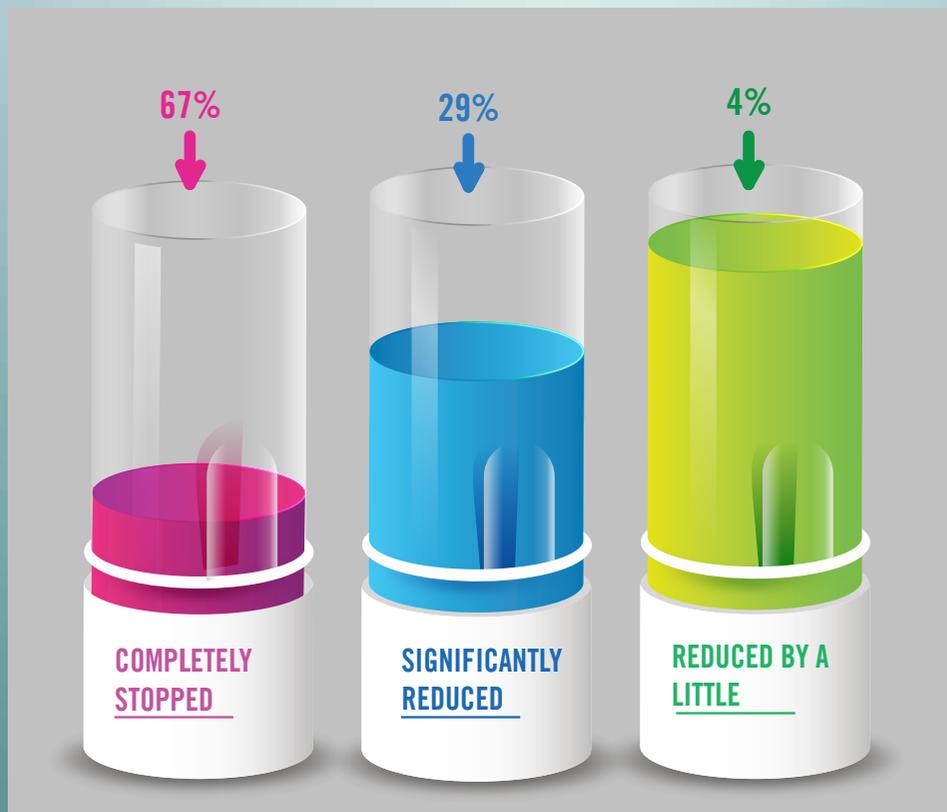
Q. Are the grownups of the household going out for livelihood purposes?



INCOME AND FOOD SECURITY

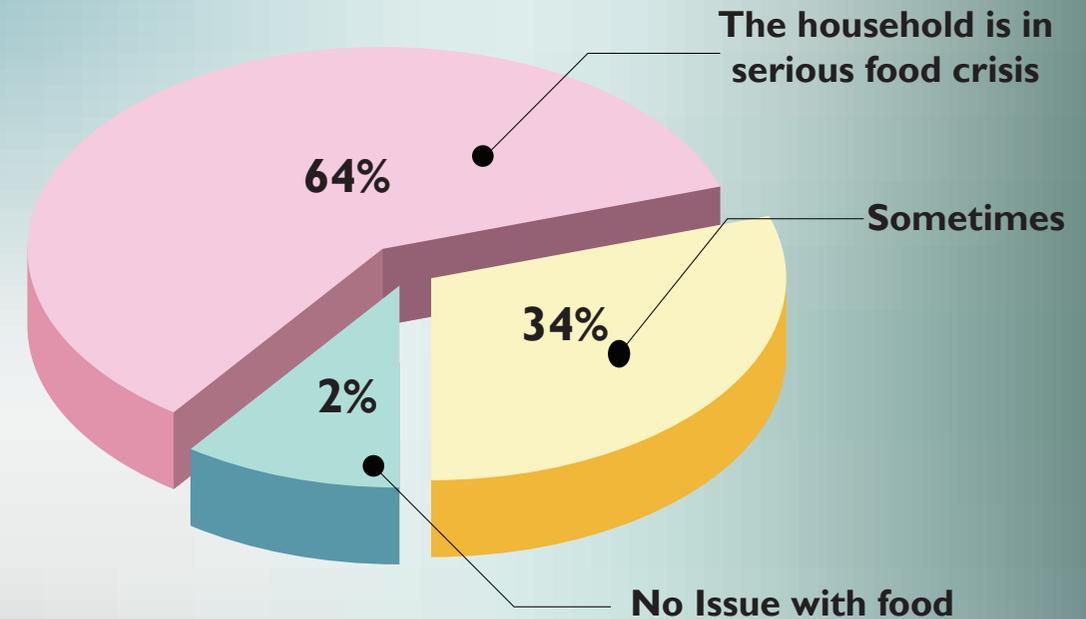
The lockdown has resulted in closure of businesses and layoff of workers. Daily wage earners working in the informal sector are the hardest hit. 96% children reported significant reduction in household income, with 67% saying that household income has totally stopped.

Q. Has your family income reduced due to COVID-19 situation?



With the earning members suffering loss of income opportunities, food security situation of the households has reached a critical level. Among the responding children, 64% said their household is suffering from severe food crisis, another 34% facing moderate food insecurity.

Q. Is there any issue with food availability in the house due to the Corona situation?



However, according to the children, most of the households (87%) are not getting any support from the government or the NGOs. As it appears, the government's initiatives announced in recent times, including household food distribution, are yet to reach the majority, and the non-government initiatives are inadequate.

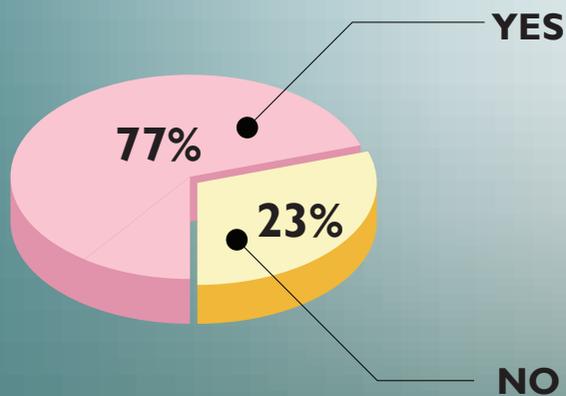
HEALTH RISK

Soap/sanitizers and masks are most important safety elements that children and other household members need to have access to. From the responses of the children, majority of them do have access to these.

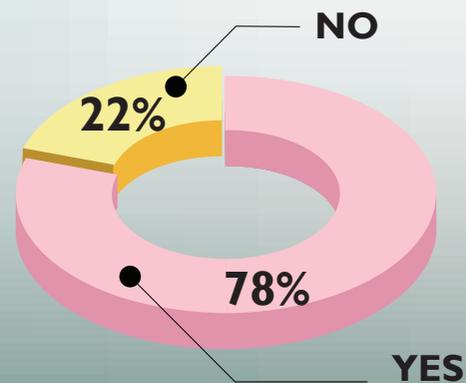


According to the children, although masks are available at home, not all members of the households are using them when going outside. 12% children reported that the members of their households are never using masks, and another 52% reported that household members are using masks 'sometimes' when they are out of home. Such practices by the adults are putting children at risk, even if they are staying at home.

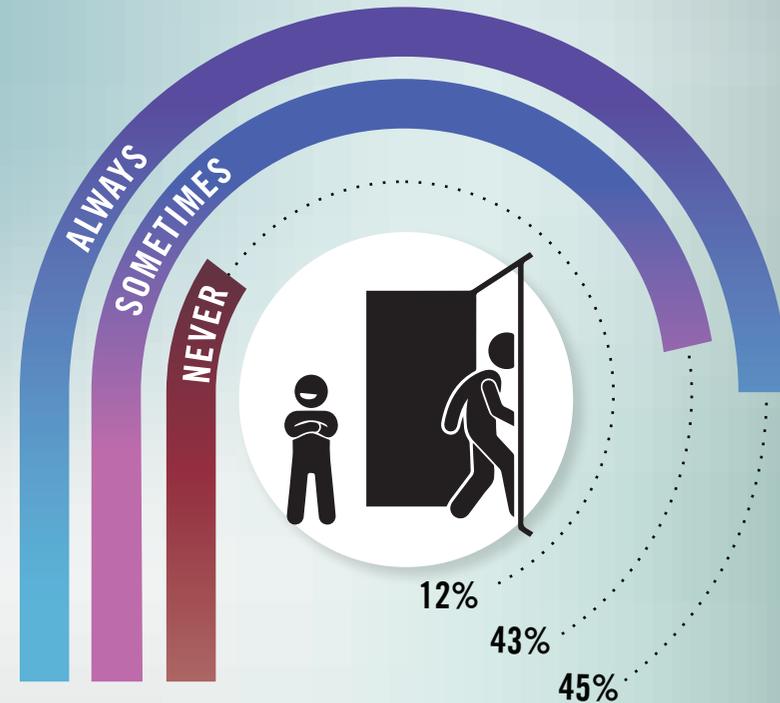
Q. Do you have soap/sanitizer in your home?



Q. Do you have face mask for your use in the household?



Q. Are the household members using masks when going outside?

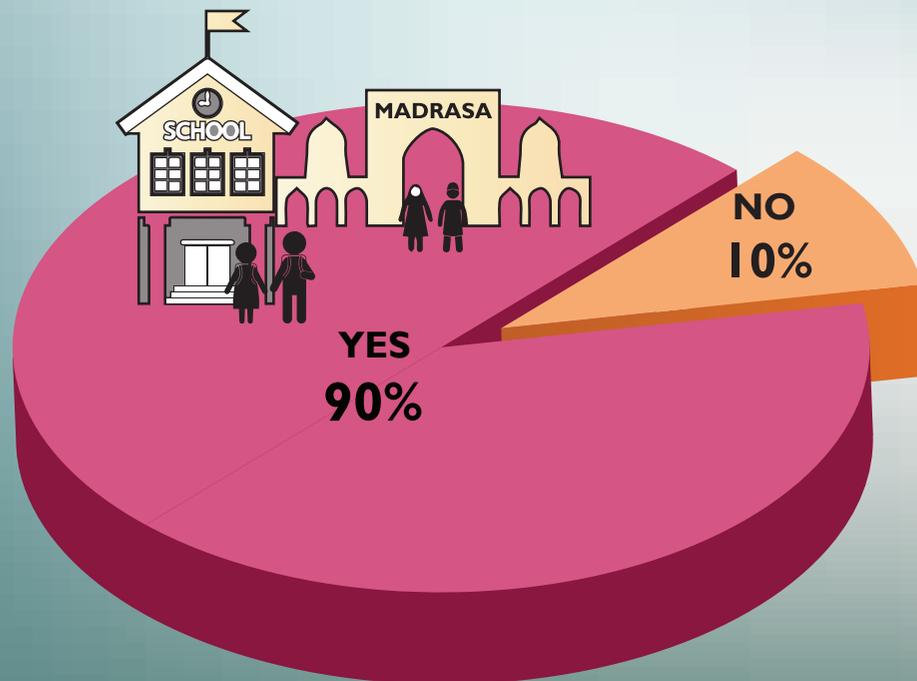


However, none of the children reported any COVID-19 infection in their household.

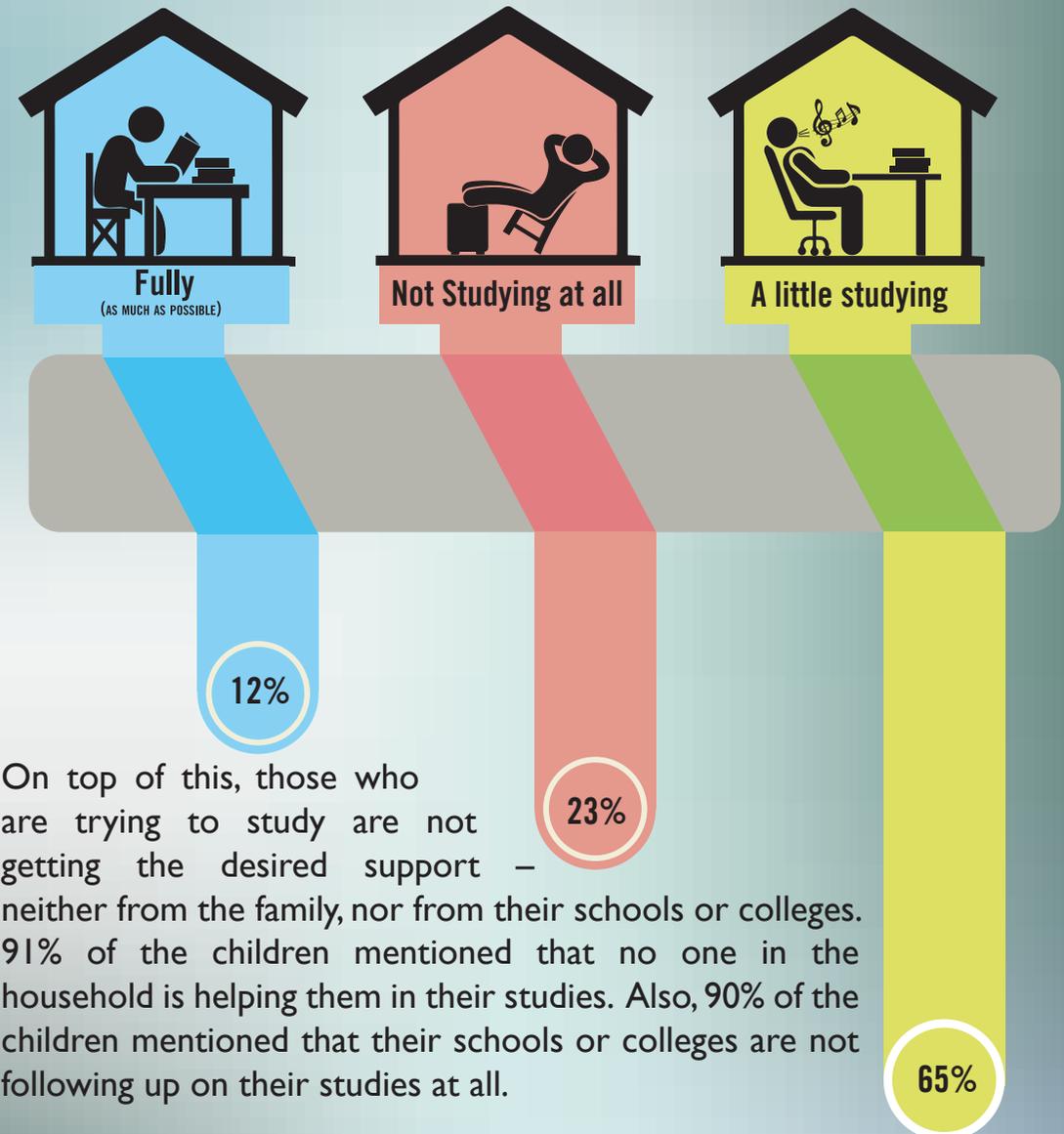
EDUCATION

Education of the children has been seriously affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The government of Bangladesh declared closure of educational institutions on 16 March, 2020, and they remain so till date. And as it appears, study at home is almost non-functional during this crisis. 90% of the respondent children were studying either in schools or colleges before the crisis. Among them, only 12% mentioned that they are continuing their studies at home in full swing. 23% are not studying at all during the lockdown, and the rest 65% of the children said they are only studying 'a little'.

Q. Were you going to school, college or madrasa before the Corona situation?



Q. Are you continuing your studies at home?

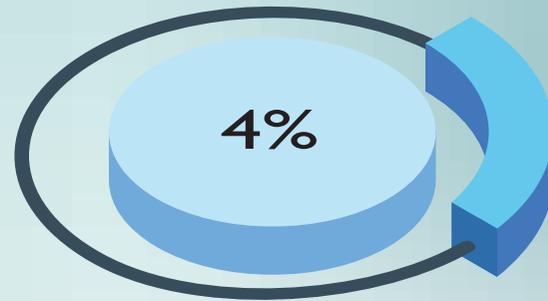


EDUCATION

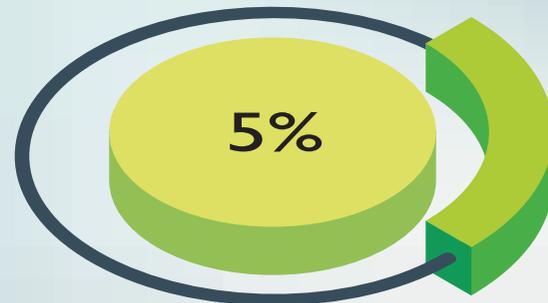
Q. Is there anyone in the household assisting you in your studies?



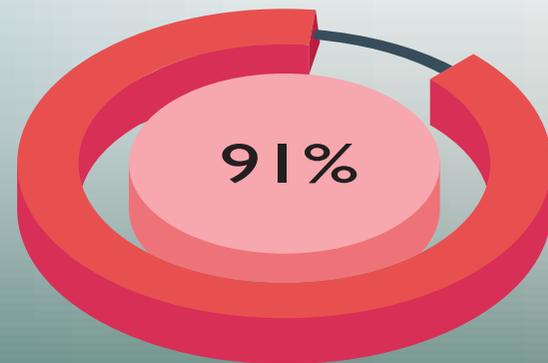
Parent



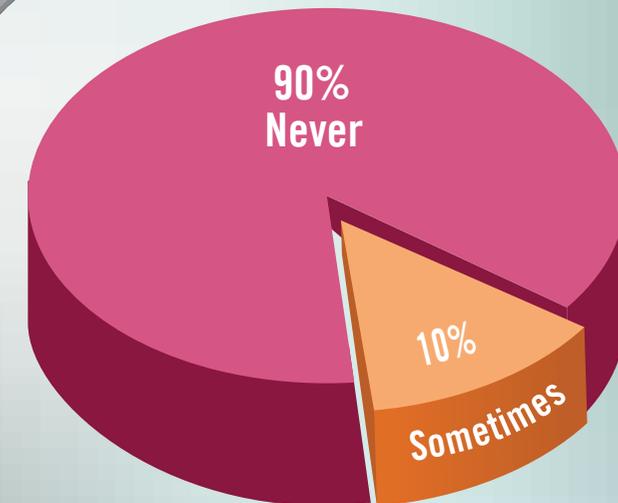
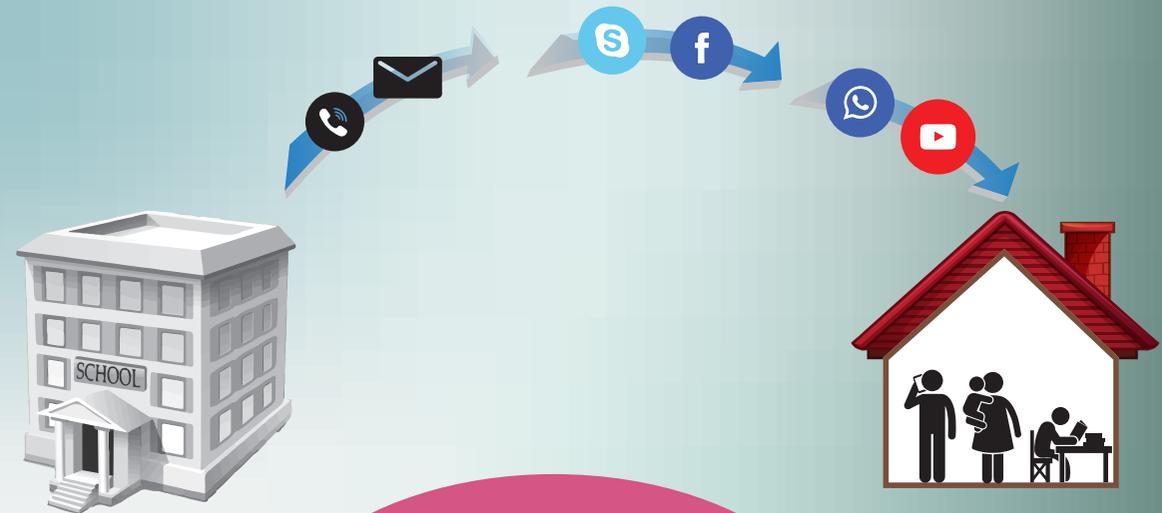
Some else in the household



No one is helping



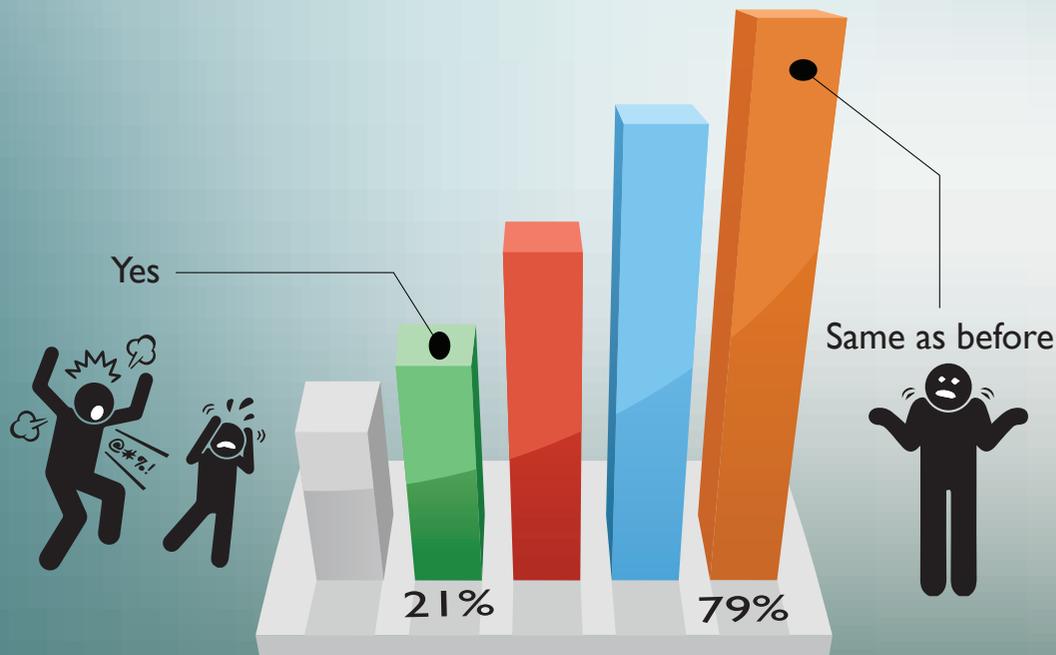
Q. Is your school/college following up on your studies?



CHILD PROTECTION

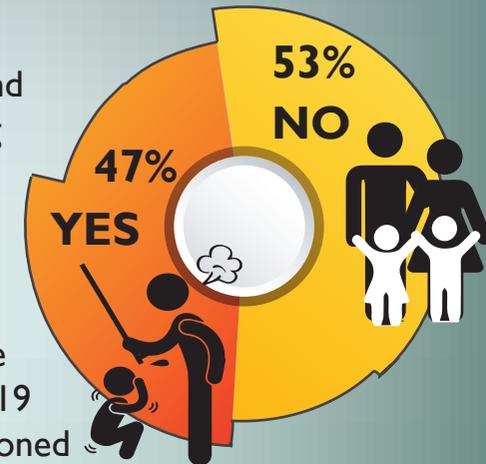
Factors such as household worries from loss of livelihoods, anxiety from the lockdown and staying home, together with the health risk have created significant stress for the adults, leading to increased risks of violence against children. From children's perception, both humiliating and physical punishments have increased at home. Of those who usually face humiliating punishment at home, 21% mentioned that such punishments have increased during the COVID-19 situation. On the other hand, this percentage is as high as 47% when it comes to physical punishment (although the percentage of children who usually face physical punishment is lower).

Q. Is there an increase in yelling or other forms of humiliating punishments?

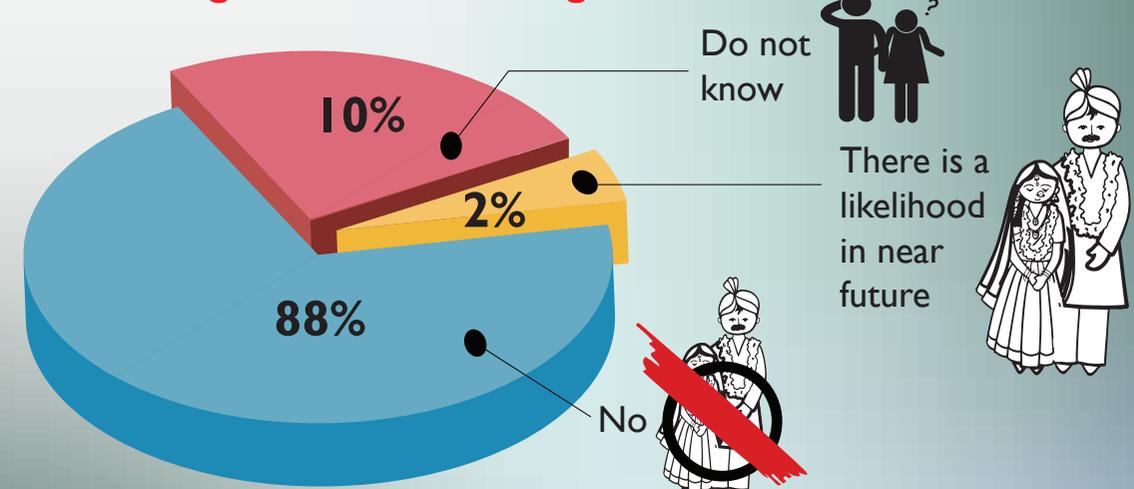


Q. Is there an increase in physical punishments?

The crisis, through the lockdown and consequent livelihood impact, is creating increased risks of child marriage. As one can assume, these are still the early days of the crisis for Bangladesh. And the responses from the children show no incidence of child marriage has taken place in their households during the COVID-19 situation. However, 2% children have mentioned that marriage of an under-age girl is being organised in their households to take place in near future.



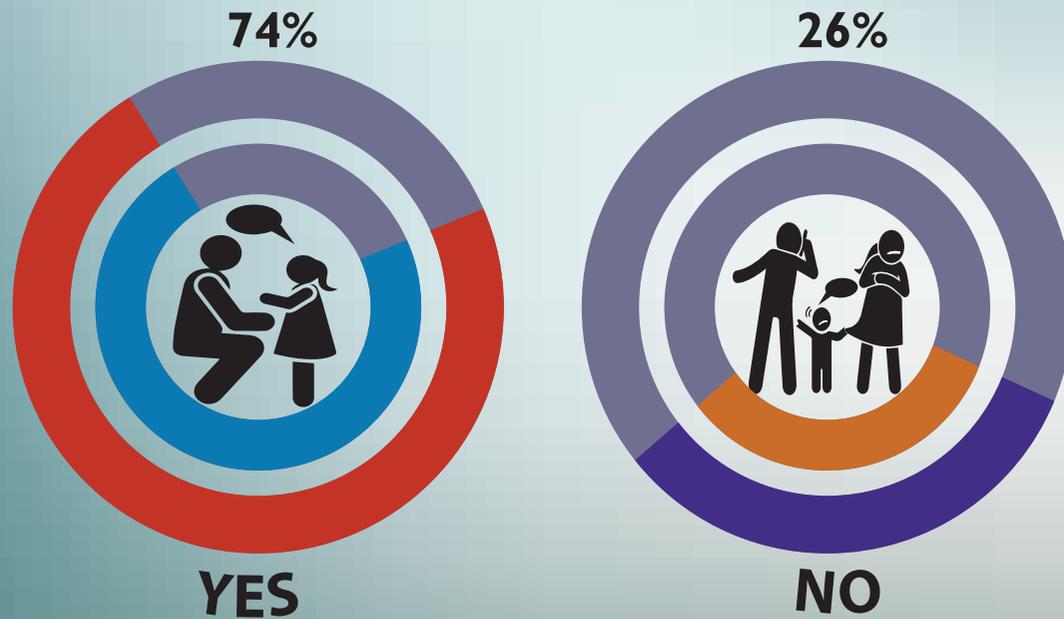
Q. During the Corona situation, did any girl from the household get married who is aged below 18?



CHILD PARTICIPATION

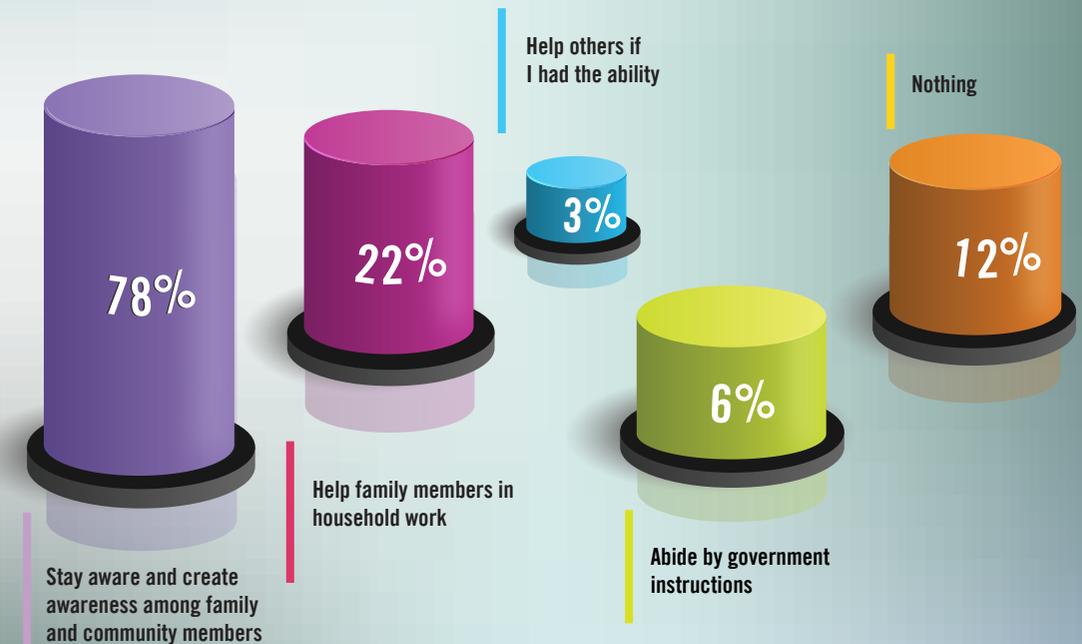
It is important that children's opinions are heard and respected during this crisis and lockdown. This is not only to ensure family and community/societal environment that is supportive of their psychosocial wellbeing, but also to be better responsive to their needs. Most of the children mentioned that their family/caregivers are taking their opinions in household decisions during the COVID situation

Q. In the current situation, do the grownups take your opinions in household decisions?



While some of the children expressed their limitations in contributing to the collective response to the crisis, majority of the children sees a role they can play in this fight. 78 children (64% of the respondents) mentioned that they can contribute by keeping aware and creating awareness among their families and communities. Another 22 children (18%) thinks they can contribute by helping their family members in household works.

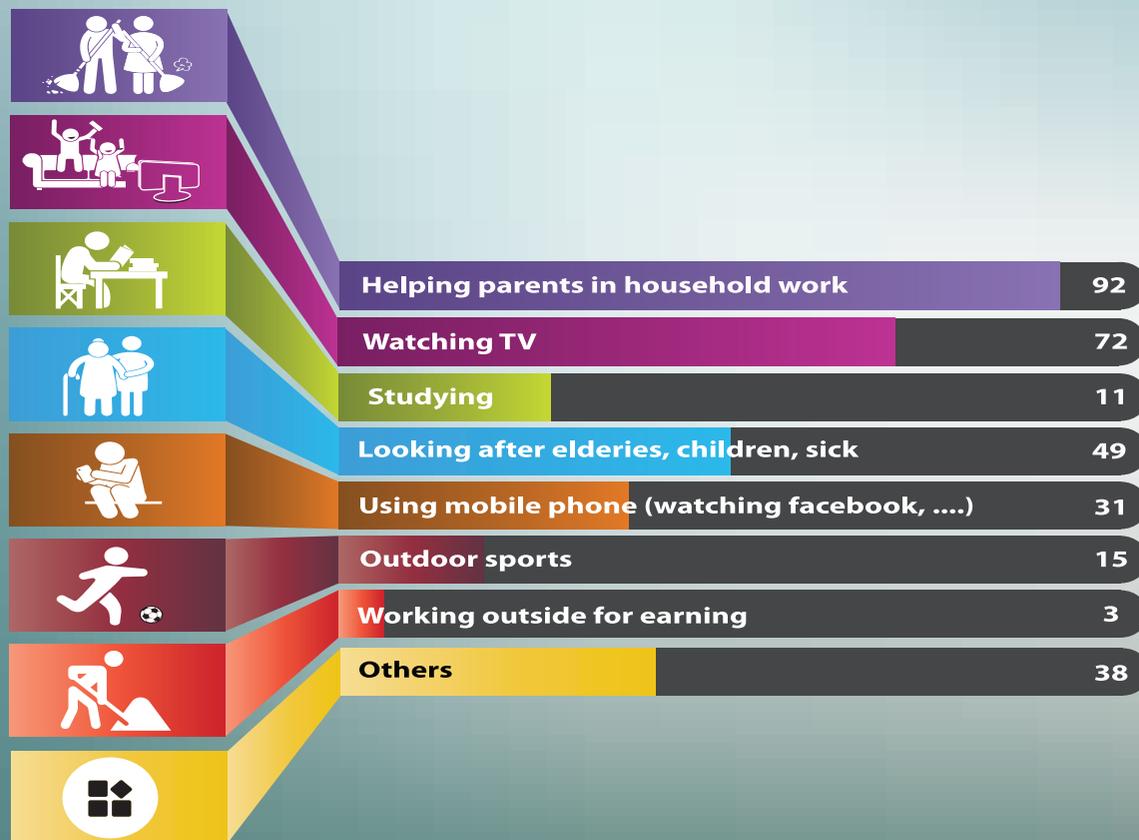
Q. Is there a way you can contribute in the current situation as a child?



PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING

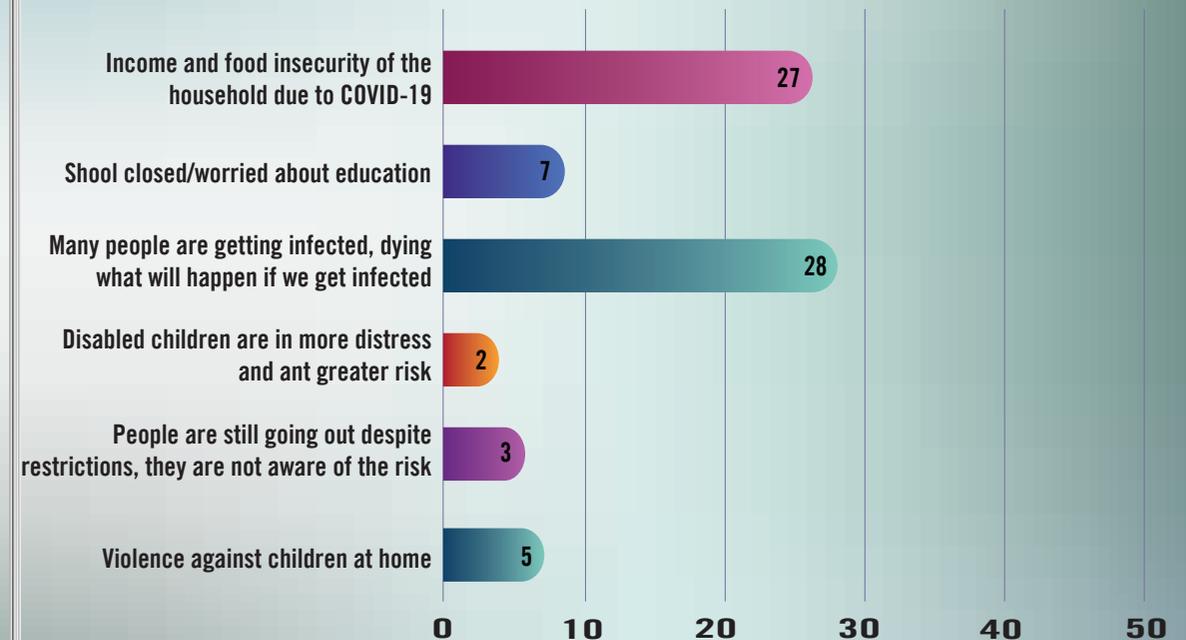
How the children are spending their time is important for their psychosocial wellbeing. From majority of the responses (92 among 121), participating in household works is one of the major ways the children are spending their time. Watching TV and looking after family members are the other major activities these children are spending their time on. On a worrying note, 18 of the 121 children said playing outdoors and working outside for earning are also major ways of spending time for them.

Q. How are you spending most of your time? *



The perception survey made an attempt to know how the pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences are impacting the children psychologically. The children were asked about their fears, worries or sadness. Of the children who said that they are scared, worried or sad about something (83 of 121), and among them who wanted to talk more about those (72), sickness and deaths caused by the virus and the concern over their own health are their greatest worries at this situation. Their other most significant concern or worry is the ongoing income and food insecurity.

Q. What are you scared, sad or worried about? **



* multiple answer questions. ** open ended questions

CONCLUSION

Informing our actions

The study made an attempt to explore the unfolding impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of the children in Bangladesh, particularly the most disadvantaged, from their own perspectives. Indeed, the findings point to the fact that all rights of these children are at stake right now. As such, it is imperative that human and child rights frameworks provide the structure of the response design. Keeping the findings from the study in mind, a child-focused response plan to COVID-19 should target the followings:

- △ Minimise risks of contagion: promote use of masks and other safe practices, provide sanitization kits to the households that do not have them.
- △ Provide livelihood support to the households : During the lockdown phase as well as in the immediate-post pandemic period, cash and/or food support will be crucial.
- △ Follow up on education: Work with schools and colleges and support them to reach each and every student during the lockdown period to follow up on their studies at home. Innovative, ICT based delivery of education has started. Support children from marginalised families with online connectivity.

△ Strengthen campaign against violence: Strengthen awareness campaigns against violence, particularly on consequences of physical and humiliating punishments at home, on social and TV/electronic media.

△ Support children's engagement: Children are aware of the situation and the sufferings of the people around them. They want to contribute. They can not only play a vital role in the awareness campaigns but also support responsiveness of the GO-NGO actions through effective engagement. Child Rights Principles should be followed in response designs.

△ Provide psychosocial support: Children are scared of infection and death, worried from parents' loss of income and livelihood, deprived from outdoor playing opportunities, sad from the translated stress of adults into violence. Programmatic interventions around Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) will thus be a critical component of a child-focused response strategy.

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