

IIT Bombay, IIT Hyderabad researchers study changes in travel pattern due to covid-19 crisis

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IIT Bombay (HT File)

A study by researchers Indian Institutes of Technology in Bombay (IIT-B) and Hyderabad (IIT-H) that looked into the impact of Covid-19 outbreak on daily commute, especially the transition phase till the national lockdown period, found that more people shifted to private transport.

Also residents of tier 1 cities were more aware of the disease than inhabitants of smaller cities.

The study, said researchers, was based on the responses of over 1,900 participants from tier-1, tier-2 and tier-3 cities. A majority of the responses were received from tier-1 cities (63.6 percent) followed by tier-2 (20.6 percent) and tier-3 cities (15.8 per cent).

“Given the uncertainties in the minds of the commuters regarding their travel behaviour due to social distancing, it is important for policymakers and local transport authorities in general to understand the change in travel pattern,” said Dr Digvijay S Pawar, from IIT Hyderabad.

In Tier-1 cities, it was found that about 12% of the respondents switched from public to private mode during the third week of COVID-19. This modal shift was around 9% in Tier-2 cities and about 7% in Tier-3 cities.

Moreover, nearly 48% of people said that they did not travel to work during the third week of March, whereas 28% continued the old frequency of travel to work. When enquired about cancellation of trips between the cities using major mode of transportation, around 18 % said they cancelled their flights whereas, 20% of respondents cancelled train journeys.

“This indicates that the awareness about Covid-19 is higher in Tier-1 cities, followed by Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities,” added Dr Pawar.

The research team comprised Prof. Nagendra Velaga, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Bombay, and Ankit Kumar Yadav, a research student with IIT Bombay and Dr Pawar and Dr Pritha Chatterjee, assistant professors, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Hyderabad.

The respondents were also enquired about their safety perception towards the use of public and private modes of transport, where 93% said that private mode of transport is safer compared to the public mode.

The researchers have recommended spreading more awareness about the ill-effects and spread of Covid-19, especially among the weaker sections of the society. “The rapidly changing diaspora of this pandemic is a threat to public health and is making human life more challenging,” added Dr Pawar.

Source: Hindustantimes

Date: 03-04-2020