

WEST BENGAL

HEATWAVE DYNAMICS

A Report on Heat Wave Scenario of West Bengal



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INTRODUCTION

As April ushers in the summer season in West Bengal, residents are contending with an intense heat wave intensified by low moisture levels. Urban and industrial areas are particularly affected, signalling a potentially harsher season ahead for the state. The Indian Meteorological Department attributes extreme weather events like heat waves to global warming and meteorological shifts. Heat waves result in fatalities, health complications, agricultural losses, food shortages, increased energy demand, and environmental strain, putting sustainability at risk.

In this context, as the common public is at the forefront of suffering from and cause of heatwave events, the research team of SwitchON Foundation surveyed to gauge public perception of heatwave challenges, impacts on daily life, mitigation strategies, and awareness of timely information in the present heatwave scenario.

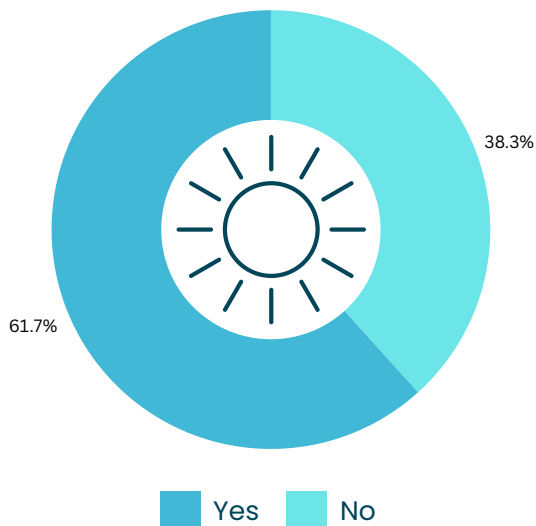
THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted with 815 participants in April 2024 across East Indian states (West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha) to capture perceptions of the ongoing heatwave. With 815 participants, responses were anonymously collected via Google Forms from various platforms. This blog focuses on 387 responses from West Bengal, where 65% were male and 35% female. The survey exclusively targeted urban areas, engaging participants from diverse ages and occupational backgrounds.



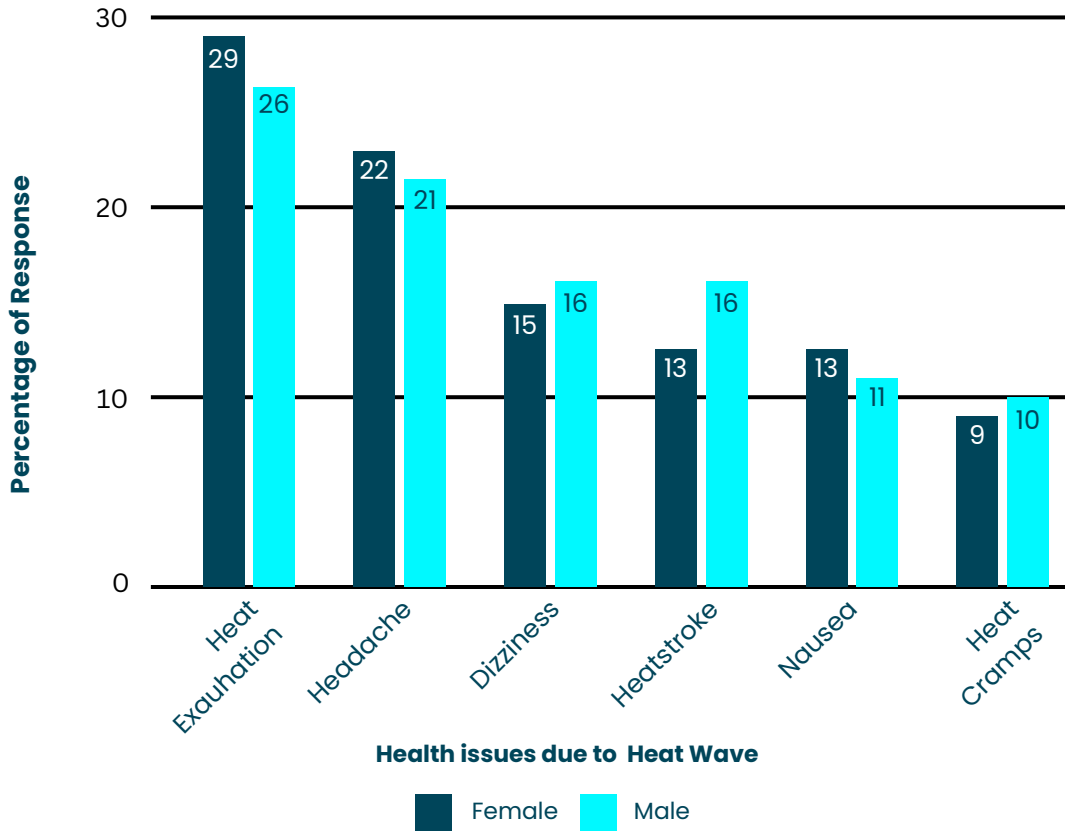
FINDINGS

- All respondents unanimously stated that the intensity of heat waves has escalated over the years.
- Perception of death and health effects from heat waves:

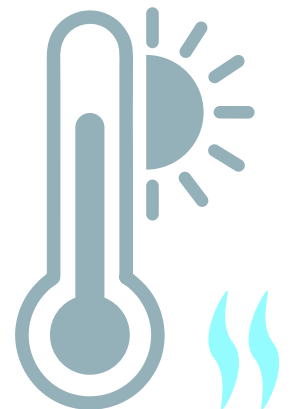
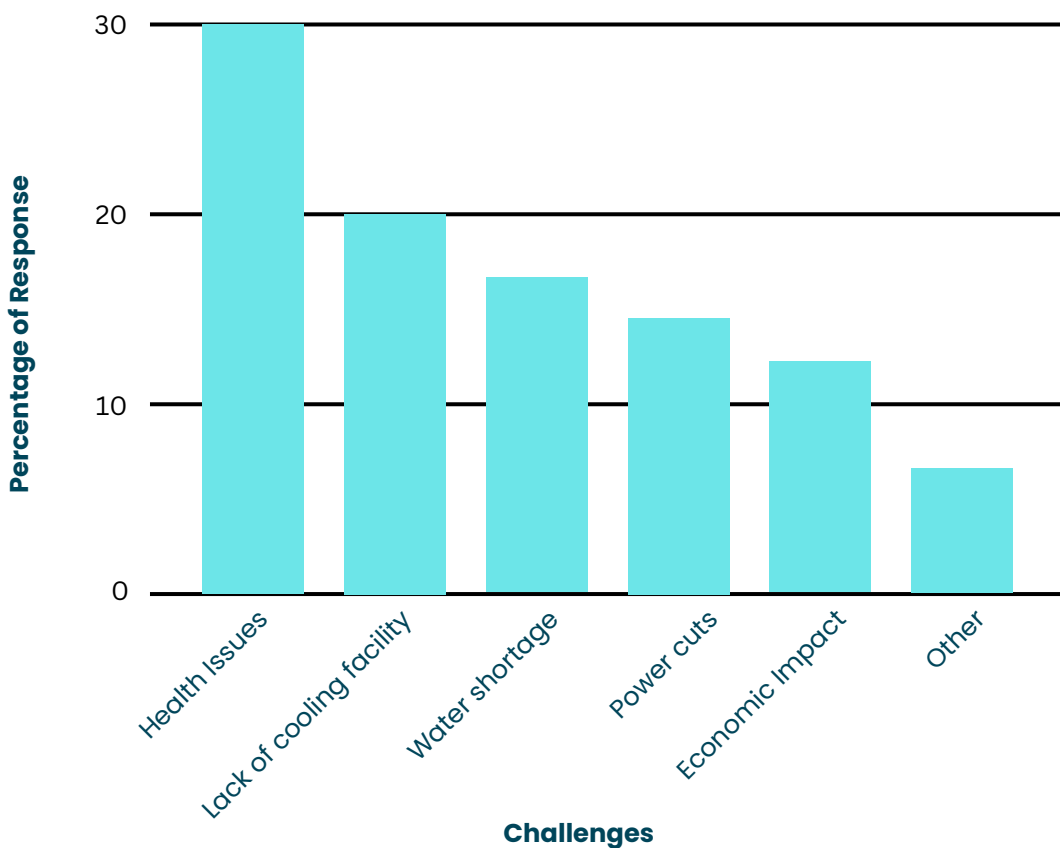


1. 61% respondents said they know individuals who have succumbed to heat waves.
2. Heat exhaustion, headaches, dizziness and heat strokes are some of the commonly noticed health issues by the respondents from Bengal.
3. Irrespective of gender roles, a majority of the respondents were noticed to cite heat exhaustion as the most common general concern due to heat waves. 28% female and 25% male respondents faced heat exhaustion during a heat wave.

Female & Male Health Issues due to Heat Wave in West Bengal



Major challenges faced by people during heat wave in West Bengal



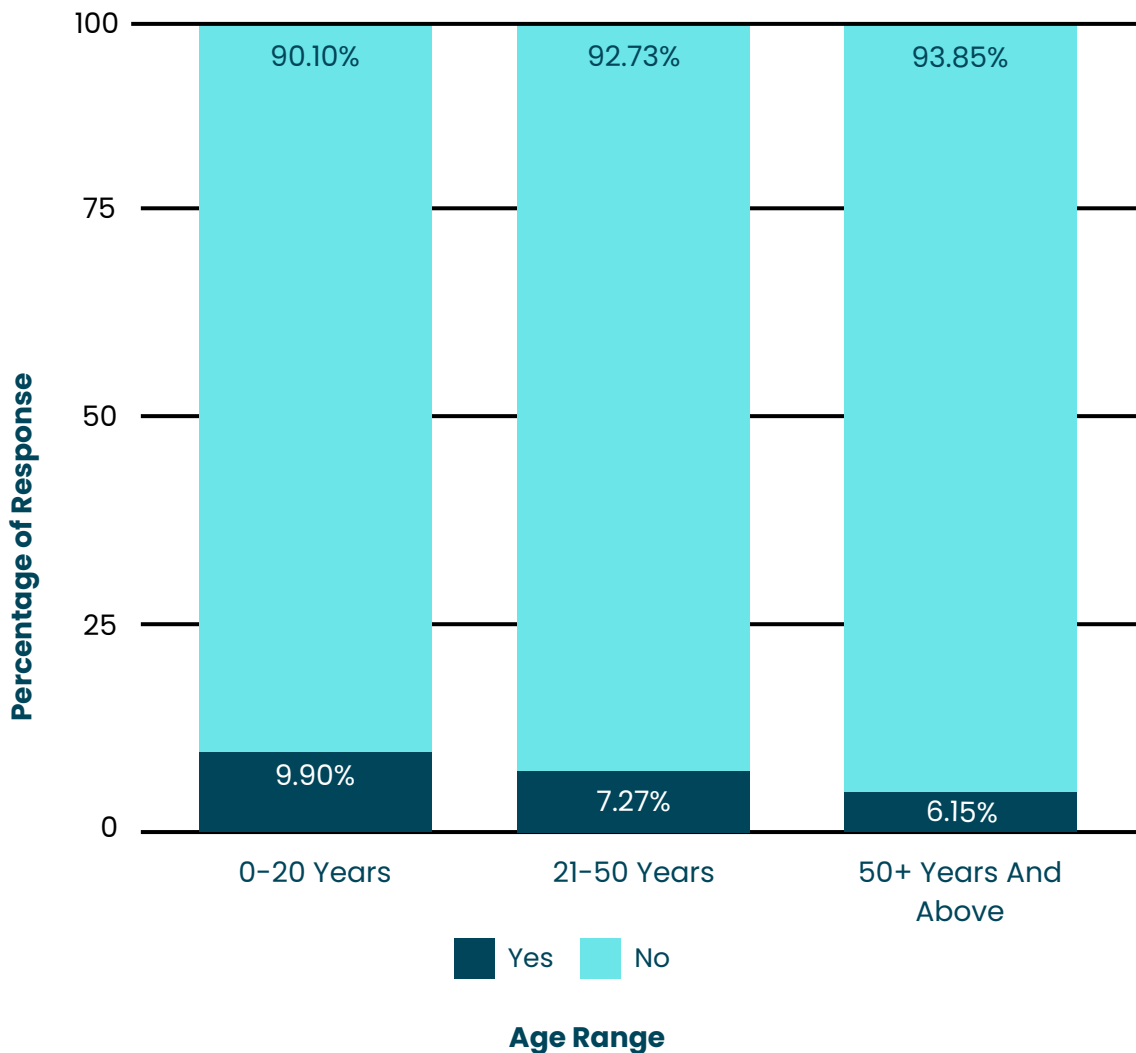


Other challenges:

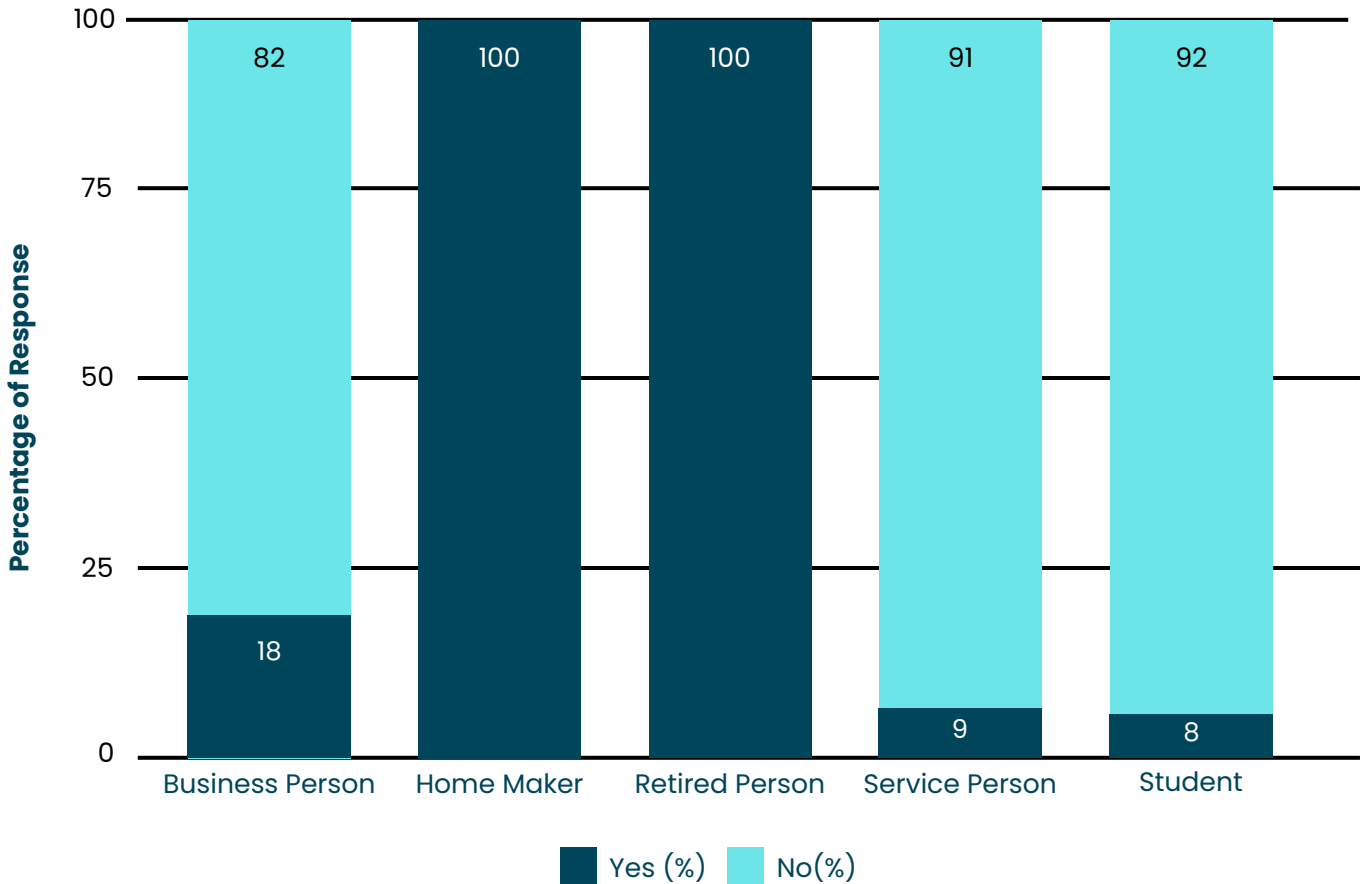
1. In Bengal, health concerns top the list of challenges among respondents during heatwaves. Over 29% of participants encounter physical issues in these conditions.
2. Several infrastructural issues emerge as significant hurdles during heatwaves. Like Water shortages (16% response) and power cuts (14% response) during the heat wave.
3. During extreme heat events, people’s accessibility to cooling facilities is considerably low in the state, which is evident from the 19% response towards the challenge of lagging cooling facilities in the state.
4. 12% of people responded that heat waves heavily impact them economically. Due to this economic impact, all the health issues and other infrastructural backdrops are being suffered by the people of Bengal.

Impact on daily activities:

People’s Perception on Heat Wave Affecting Daily Activities in West Bengal



Heat Wave Affecting Daily Activities of West Bengal



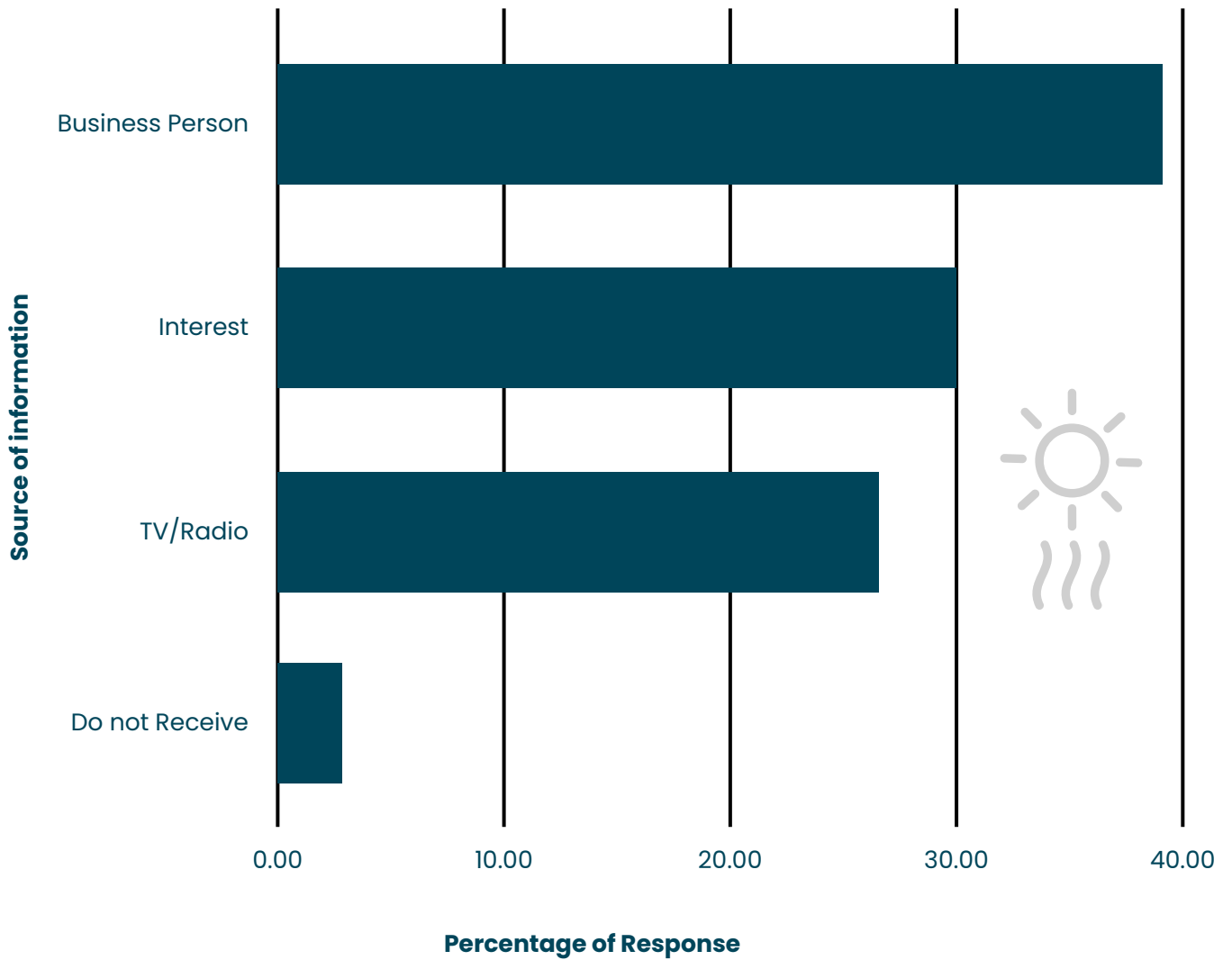
Occupational Classwise Daily Activities Affected

1. Irrespective of age and gender, the day-to-day activities of the people of Bengal are being affected due to heat waves.
2. The response pattern shows that primarily indoor dwellers, Homemakers and retirees, bear the full force of heat waves.



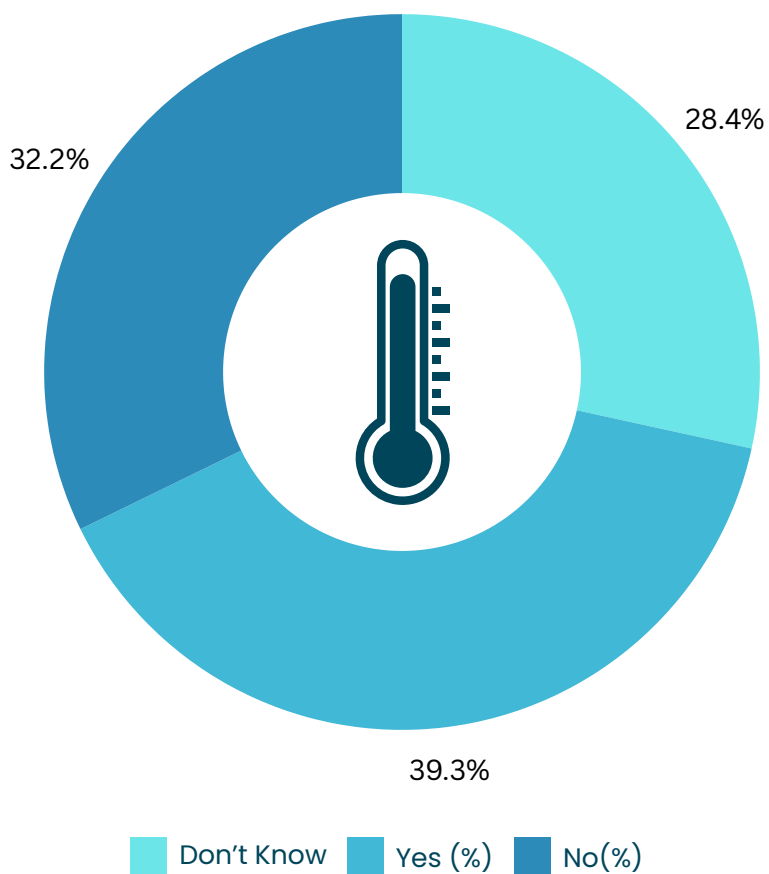
People's awareness and source of information

Heat Wave Affecting Daily Activities of West Bengal





Awareness among people on the presence of heatwave Action Plan in Cities of West Bengal



1. In regards to information regarding heat waves, the respondents opined that they mostly get information about the heat wave through social media and internet sources.
2. While a small number of respondents cited a lack of information, the overall scale of this issue is significant, warranting government attention to address the needs of this population.
3. Merely 32% of the surveyed population is cognizant of the government's heat wave action plan (HAP).
4. Of the remaining respondents, 39% are confident in the absence of such action plans in West Bengal, while the remaining 26% lack awareness of their existence.

People's Solution:

1. As the urban areas experience the worst impacts of heat waves, near about 52% of the respondents have suggested modifying the urban planning to mitigate this extreme scenario.
2. Public awareness of heatwave conditions (37%) and updating existing policies (32%) emerged as two other crucial measures for mitigating heatwaves.



99% of the respondents in West Bengal think that the government authorities should take more action to address the impacts of heat waves



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Citizens

- Stay alert and updated on the daily weather news.
- Stay hydrated and drink sufficient water whenever possible.
- Stay covered when moving out and wear light-coloured, thin, loose, cotton garments.
- Stay indoors and in the shade as much as possible. Avoid the peak timing of 12 noon to 3 pm.
- Special care needs to be given to vulnerable populations like the elderly and infants.
- Seek medical help if any symptoms of heat stroke appear.

Government

- Disseminate information through public service announcements, billboards, and outreach efforts for awareness.
- Establish cooling shelters and water stations in urban areas to mitigate heat-related illnesses.
- Enhance water infrastructure and promote rainwater harvesting to bolster water resilience.
- Enforce existing laws to combat air pollution and reduce Kolkata's health burden.
- Collaborate with electricity companies to ensure consistent power supply and manage energy demand effectively.



WAY FORWARD:

Moving forward, concerted efforts are imperative to tackle the escalating heatwave challenges in West Bengal. Urban planning modifications, heightened public awareness, and policy updates are crucial steps. Citizens must stay informed and take necessary precautions, while the government should prioritize disseminating information, establishing cooling shelters, enhancing water infrastructure, enforcing laws against pollution, and collaborating with electricity companies for sustainable energy management.



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SwitchON Foundation, established in 2008, is a leading non-profit organisation focusing on Environment Sustainability and Equal Opportunities. Operating in 10 Indian states. It leads initiatives in Clean Energy Access, Sustainable Agriculture, Skilling, Clean Air and Sustainable Cities. Key strengths encompass innovative project implementation, capacity building, field support, awareness and advocacy.

