

# In fact

Unlock the power of data for social change

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**'In Fact'** is a quarterly newsletter by ISDM DataShakti. ISDM DataShakti, powered by Capgemini, is a pioneering single-window SDG data platform that makes SDG data easily accessible to social sector professionals like you, so you can focus on creating change on the ground.

## A Story in Numbers

### Why India needs to start washing its hands more

*By: Siddharth Dhote*

This International Day of Epidemic Preparedness marked half a decade since the Covid-19 outbreak. The day reminded us that epidemics have devastating impacts on human lives and wreak havoc on long-term social and economic development<sup>[1]</sup>. This reminder is important especially for low-income countries that have reduced healthcare system capacities, and are therefore at risk of substantially higher fatality rates due to epidemics<sup>[2]</sup>.

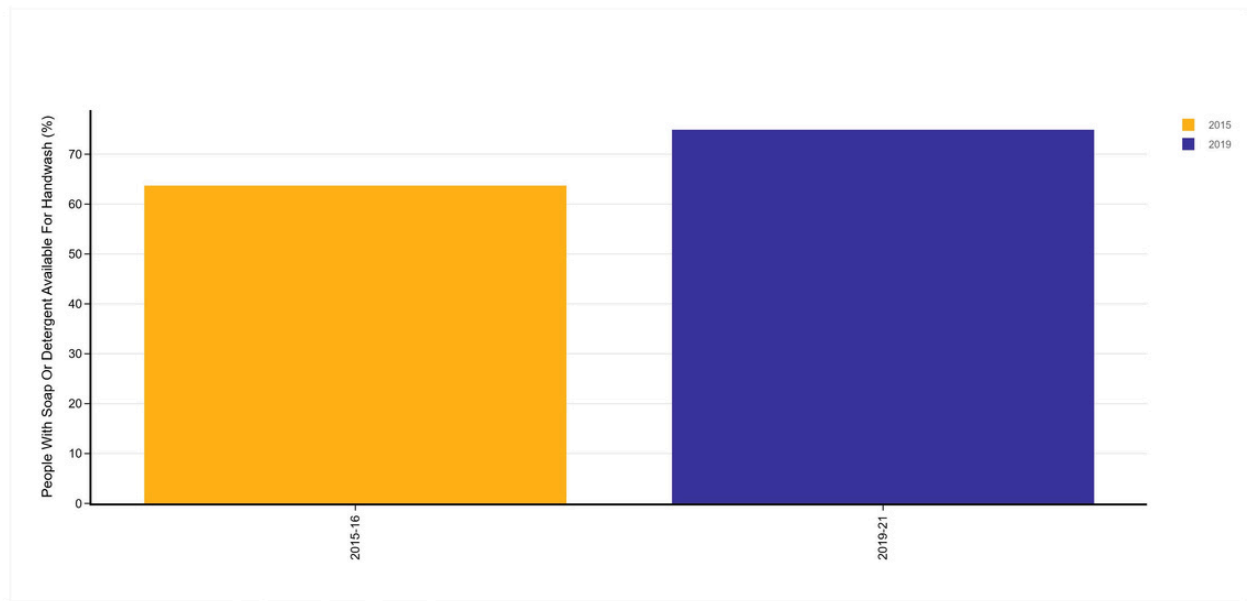
During the COVID-19 pandemic, handwashing was repeatedly advised as one of the key actions to reduce transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus<sup>[3]</sup>. Handwashing has health benefits such as minimising the spread of coronavirus, influenza and other infectious diseases, preventing infectious causes of diarrhoea, decreasing respiratory infections, averting child stunting and reducing infant mortality rate during home birth deliveries. Handwashing also prevents diarrheal diseases, which limit the body's ability to absorb nutrition from food<sup>[4]</sup>.

Promotion of handwashing would ensure better preparedness for unforeseen epidemics. A 2023 Lancet meta-analysis study of 27 from low- and middle-income countries, including India, found that promoting handwashing with soap reduces the risk of acute respiratory infections by about 17%<sup>[5]</sup>.

According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data from 2019–21, in India, handwashing practices were observed for 96 per cent of the population. Out of this, 92 per cent used only water to wash their hands, and only 75 per cent used soap<sup>[6]</sup>. However, this is still an improvement from 2015–16, where only 67 per cent used soap for handwashing.

**Fig 1.1: Percentage of People Using Soap for Handwashing, 2015–16 and 2019–21**

Created by: Siddharth Dhote | On: 16/12/2025

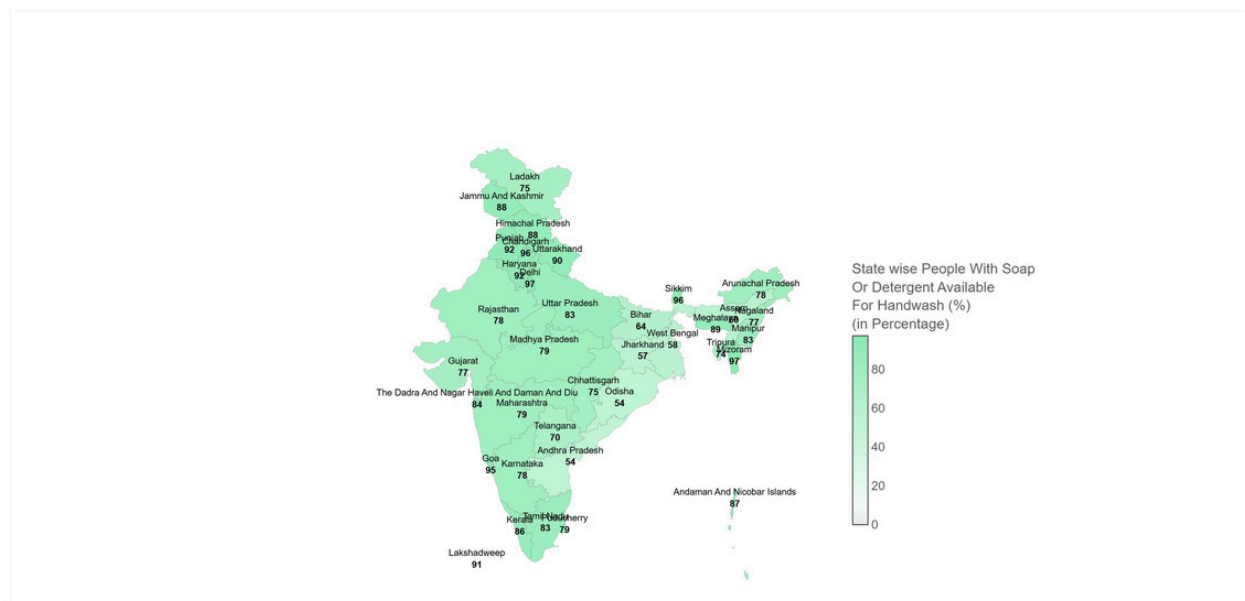


Data source: National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 4 and 5 - (Country) (2015,2019)

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**Figure 2.2: Percentage of People Using Soap for Handwashing by State, 2019–21**

Created by: Siddharth Dhote | On: 16/12/2025



Data source: National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 4 and 5 - (State) (2015,2019)

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Odisha and Andhra Pradesh had the lowest share of people using soaps to wash their hands. Almost half the population in both these states did not have access to soaps for handwashing. On the other hand, both Delhi and Mizoram had near universal coverage for people using soap to wash their hands. Handwashing through alcohol-based agent/soap also does not seem universal, as millions of Indians do not have access to basic amenities<sup>[7]</sup>.

There is an urgent need to intervene and improve the handwashing behaviour of the people, especially in regions where soap-based handwashing is lagging behind, as it can significantly reduce the spread of coronavirus and other infectious diseases, diarrhoea, respiratory infections, and infant mortality.

# News and Updates

- In the last 3 months, ISDM DataShakti helped over 700 decision-makers from 200 Social Purpose Organisations across Bengaluru, Delhi, Jhansi, Hyderabad, Vadodara, Vijayawada and Madurai use the platform, and leverage data to have greater impact.
- Good news for all subscribers: the platform has added 2 new datasets and 17 new indicators. More data for you to use in your work!

## Become A Data-Driven Organisation

Join over 1,000 of your social sector peers in becoming data-forward. Attend Data Dialogues, a free, full-day, in-person session for you to improve how your organisation works with data.

Learn more and register here: <https://luma.com/wylfwmu5>

What your organisation will get out of this event:

- **Data Maturity Assessment:** Understand how your organisation currently uses data, and how you can improve it to achieve greater impact.
- **Customised Action Plan:** Get concrete next steps to advance your organisation's data maturity.
- **Expert Consulting:** Participate in group sessions to address your organisation's specific challenges.
- **Pro Bono Follow-up:** Get free one-on-one online consulting (for a select few organisations) during the event.
- **Peer Network:** Make useful connections with NGOs at similar capacity levels.

 Jan 20, 2026,  Delhi

Limited Spots. Register soon!

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**NOTE: If your organisation is interested but located outside Delhi NCR, do nominate someone from Delhi NCR who will benefit from attending.**

# References

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