

Our 43 young respondents for this newsletter range from ages 6 to 16, each providing us with their unique perspective of the lockdown. While the newsletter shows how the children have adapted to the conditions in the last four months, an understanding of the various ways in which the pandemic has impacted them could pave the way for holistic policies integrating their input.

HOW DO THE
YOUNGEST
RESIDENTS
OF DHARAVI
COPE WITH THE
LOCKDOWN?

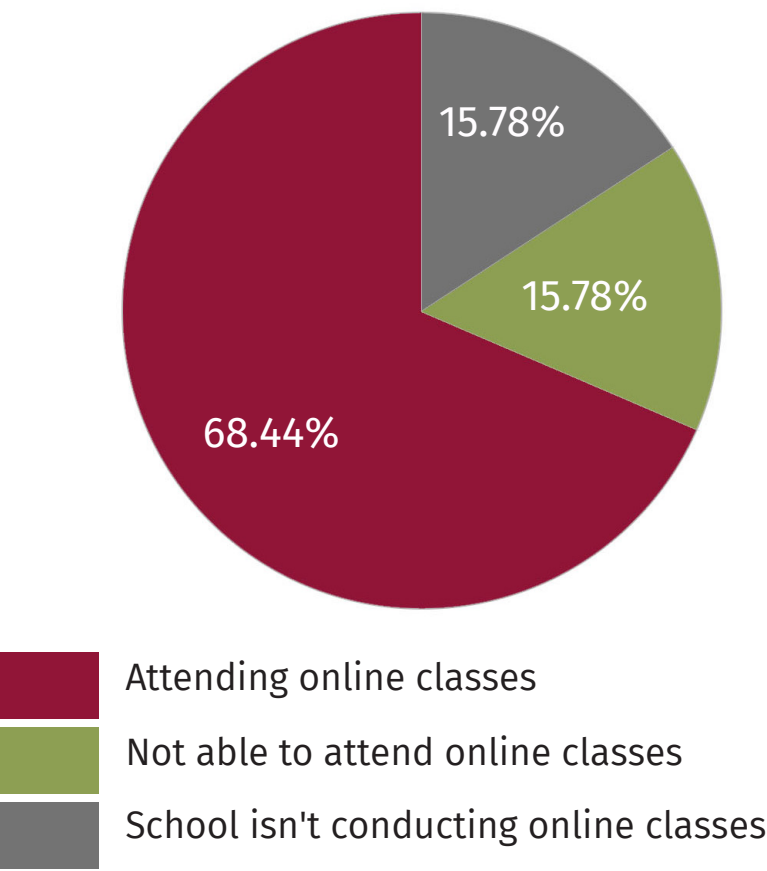
Being aware and being safe

All the children we have spoken to are very knowledgeable of the pandemic and the lockdown. While an underlying fear of getting the virus was expressed by many, even the youngest of our interviewees have been religiously following safety measure. Standard instructions by parents to not step out of the house, wash hands every 20 minutes, wearing masks, and keeping a distance of three feet from people have been proudly respected by the children. While they may not fully understand the logic of these safety measures, such simple instructions have been easy for them to follow, making them realise the gravity of the situation at the same time. In many families, the elder children constantly remind their parents and younger siblings to follow the precautions as well.

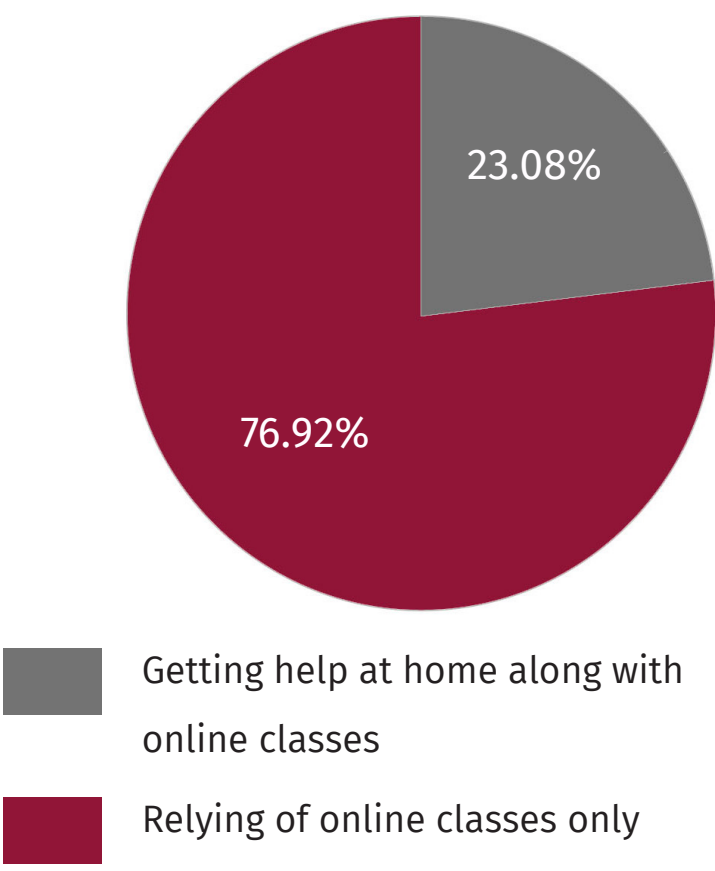
Lockdown's impact on studies

Online classes are now a part of the new normal, but unfortunately, the logistic is not always sufficient to meed the needs. Most of the children we spoke to have been attending online classes for a while now, taking place either on zoom calls or WhatsApp groups. The new teaching method has led to an overall increase in homework. In some schools, the younger children (6-9 years) are being closely monitored by asking for regular submission of homework over Whatsapp. On the other hand, some schools, have not been able to implement online teaching for all children, and were forced to limit them only to 9th and 10th standard students. Children who have not been able to study online during the lockdown, either don't own a smartphone or in one case, their teacher traveled back to her village.

Many children claim to struggle with following online teaching. Though the majority of teachers are ready to provide additional help, children often need in-person attention. This is sought from their siblings, parents, or in the case of Loretta,a 14year old resident of Dharavi, private tuitions, which help them understand the lesson and do their homework. In many households, the onus now falls on the parents to ensure quality education for the child, and this is particularly difficult when the parents are illiterate. Borrowing notes from friends and copying from them have become a necessary routine The quality of online teaching, along with their child's attention span and grasping abilities has been matters of concern for many parents.

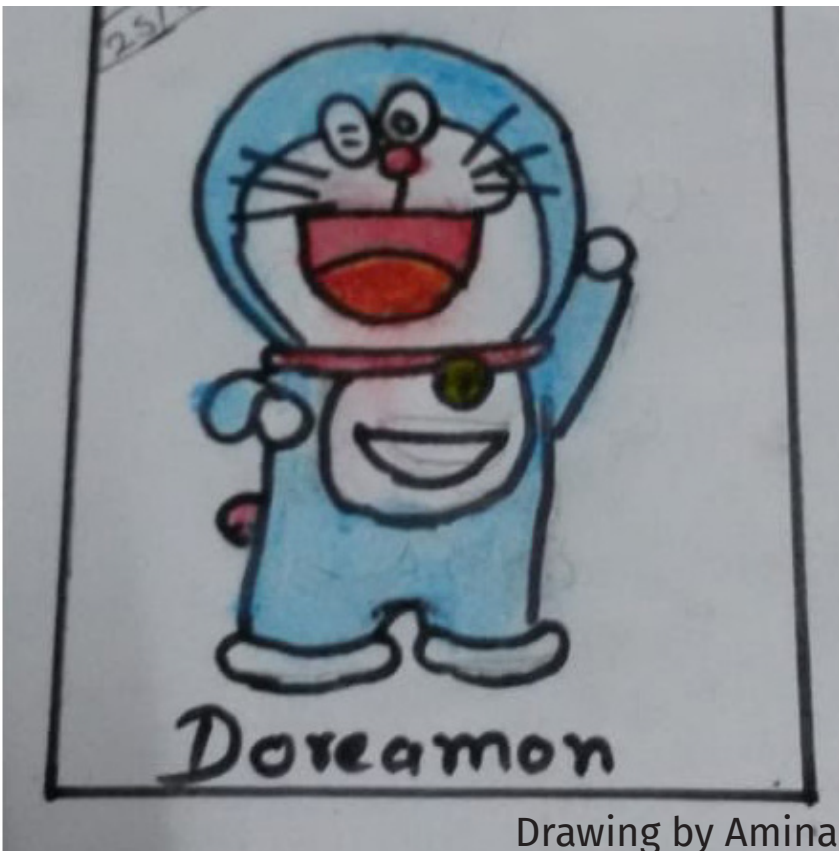
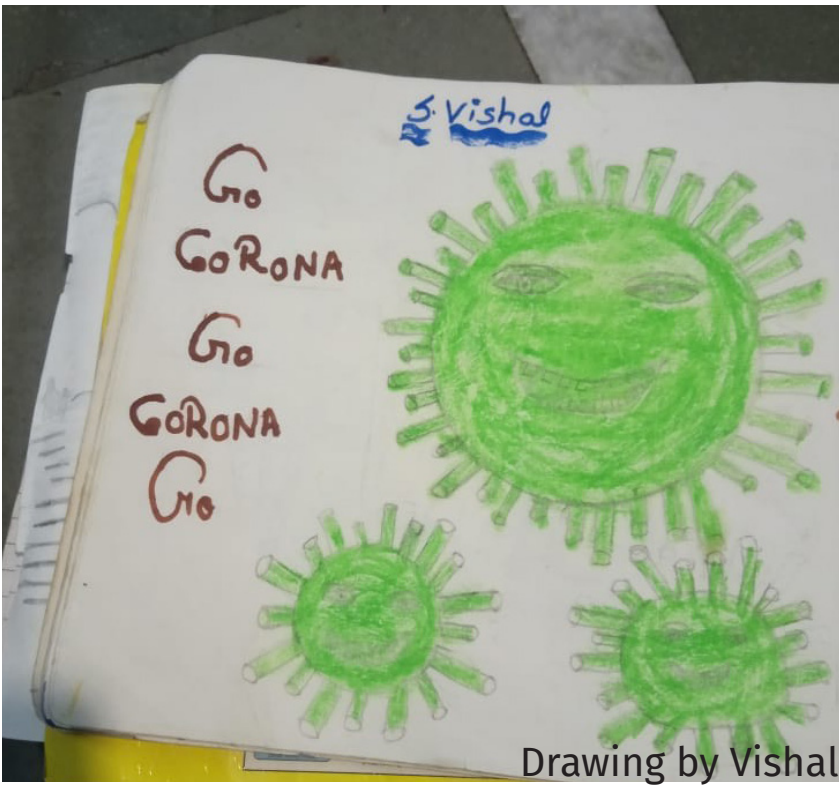


The pie chart shows the division of students who are able to attend online classes and who aren't.



This pie chart is to demonstrate the percentage of the respondents getting help with their academics at home.

ARTWORK



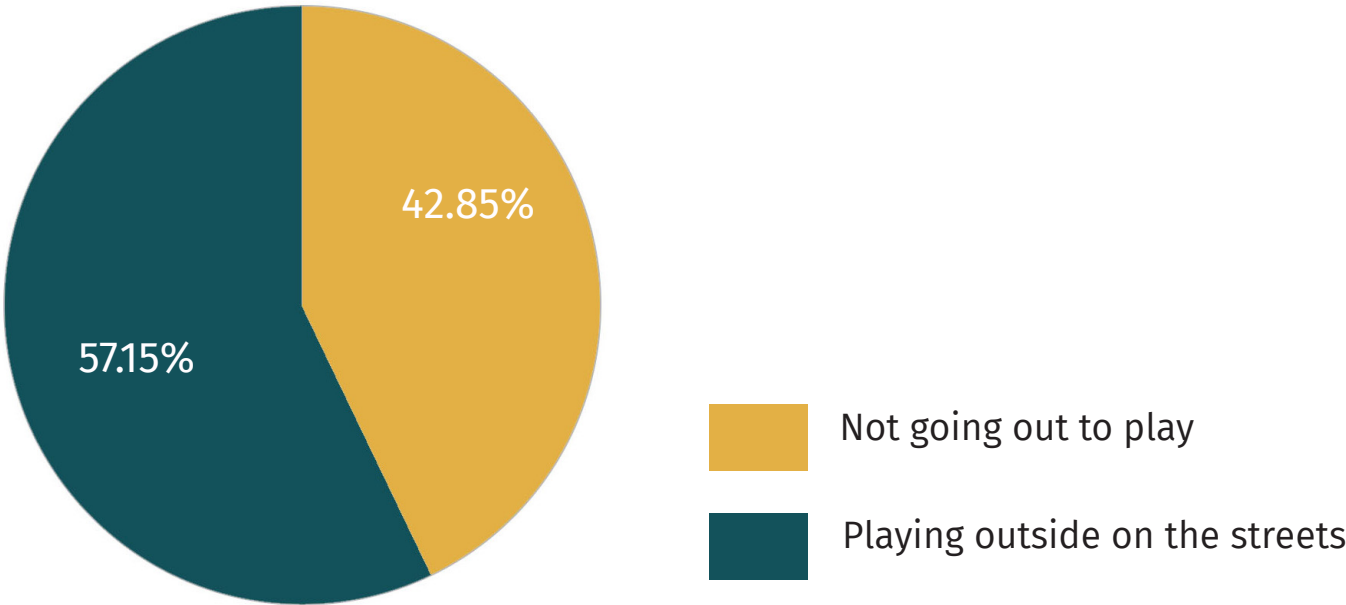
These are some of the drawings done by the kids during the lockdown.

Help with household work

The lockdown has forced families to spend an increased amount of time together, which has resulted in the division of household chores. While some of these kids have always helped with these chores, there are many who have been helping only because of the lockdown. Some children are pretty sure that housework has increased since everyone is stuck at home. Activities such as sweeping, mopping, cooking, washing utensils, filling water containers, etc. are divided according to the age of the child, but even children as young as 6 have been involved in some form or another. They have become more aware of the difficulties and financial situations in the house.

Spending time

On the upside, this ample amount of free time from school has forced children to find other activities to occupy themselves. Those with creative leanings have taken to drawing, singing, or dancing. Family play times have become common, with indoor games such as carrom and ludo. TV and phone screen time have generally increased in most households since the lockdown. It has been difficult to keep the younger ones engaged, especially since they are unable to go out, say some parents. Some children play out on the streets close to home with restricted timings, proudly claiming to follow all safety precautions and choosing to play non-contact sports such as hide-n-seek.



The pie chart here shows the percentage of kids going out to the streets outside their houses to play and the percentage of kids strictly staying indoors.

Kindred Spirits

Friends are a very important component of a child’s life, growth, and development. This lockdown has curtailed interactions with other children almost completely, school environments being the biggest facilitator. Seeing their friends every day on video calls during classes is a welcome respite for many. Rules change from household to household: some parents allow their children to play in the streets with neighbours, while some impose a strict outdoor ban. Children, especially between 6-9 years have been most eager to go out and play, and tend to have more neighbourhood friends. For those with friends living far away, they have been exploring the digital world, using Whatsapp and online games to spend time together. However, many don’t have their friend’s phone numbers, don't have a phone, or have limited access to their parents’ phones.



Kids pursuing indoor activities and spending time with their friends from the neighbourhood.

STORIES

7 and out of her childhood

Akhila, a 7year old girl from Dharavi has matured past her age. Akhila’s father is away, her mother is suffering from cancer and needs to go for chemotherapy frequently. During her mother’s absence, she is the one holding the fort. She manages to do the household chores, takes care of her younger and goes to the store run by her mother. Her brother has also been helping with the smaller tasks during the lockdown, but Akhila is the one her mother trusts with most responsibilities. Along with these tasks, she also makes sure to study and do her homework on time.



The images above are a few examples of how the kids are coping with the lockdown while taking necessary precautions.