

Let's talk about the air

Customised session for ASHA workers on air quality, health impacts and more



On account of the [International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies](#), Parisar and [Prayas Health Group](#) organised an interactive session for 40 ASHA¹ workers from the Kothrud and Shivajinagar area. The session was organised at [PMC's Indradhanushya Centre for Citizenship](#) on 4th September at 10:30 am.

The session was designed keeping in mind the profile of these health workers and emphasis was making it more interactive and building on the knowledge and experience that they have as health care workers. In fact, this group was chosen keeping in mind the potential they have in disseminating health related information to households. The intention is to engage with this group consistently to develop a better understanding of air quality and further explore if and how air quality information can be disseminated by them along with the other health messages and awareness that they deliver.

¹ The ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) Programme was launched in 2007 under the National Health Mission. The model is based on the training of ASHAs as the first level of contact for communities, creating awareness about health issues and providing access to primary health care.

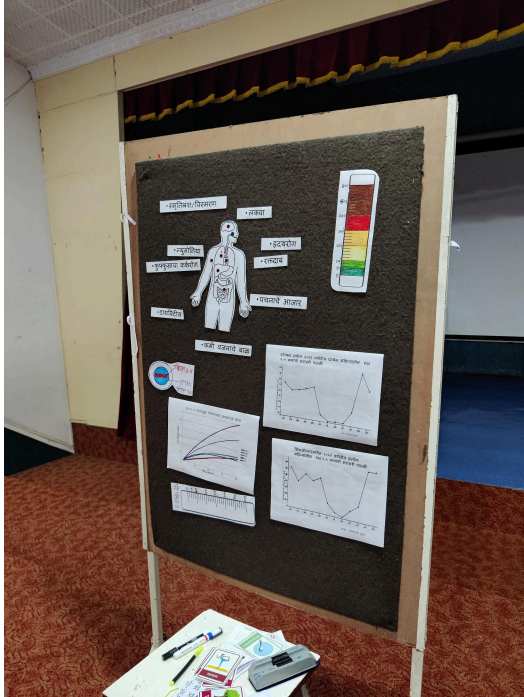
Module Resources

1. A handmade presentation using a storytelling method called 'Chitra Katha' to throw light on what is air pollution, what are its health impacts and some cursory information about AQI.
2. A pre and post session survey to gauge perception and understanding about air pollution
3. An interactive card game to understand sources and solutions to air pollution.

The chitra katha can be easily understood as the handmade version of our modern day presentations. However, the impact of this method was found to be much more engaging and precise in bringing out certain realisations about air pollution and its health impacts. This method allows the presenter to weave a story around the issue, introduce linkages systematically without burdening the audience with too much information at a time and allowing greater clarity of concepts. This of course depends also on the way the story is presented and Dr Ritu Parchure and her team at Prayas made sure that there was a clear flow of information and clear takeaways from the presentation.



With the help of Chitra Katha scenes, Dr Ritu Parchure first started with the health impact of air pollution. The strategy, however, was to first build on what they already knew about health disorders and those that they dealt with regularly in their work. She then proceeded to dive deeper into the linkage between air pollution and these disorders, pictorially showing the disease burden due to air pollution.



Further, the question of what exactly is air pollution was tackled, and a little more time was spent on understanding particulate matter pollution. A representation of the entire body and the incidence of diseases in its different parts made it clear that air pollution affected many more organs than is generally perceived to be the case.

Towards the end, Dr Ritu touched upon the question of how one knows whether the air is polluted and the extent of it. Introducing the concept of the air quality index in a very simple manner, she went on to highlight that the risk of disease is not linearly correlated to the AQI, and that once air quality crosses a certain safe threshold, the risk increases considerably even at moderate levels of air pollution.

The session was followed by an interactive card game to understand more about the causes of and solutions to air pollution. The set of cards is a mix of causes and solutions which can be identified as real/ effective and fake/ ineffective. In the first round, each woman was given a card which had a picture of an activity that caused air pollution and some which weren't. We then asked the women to make two groups depending on whether they felt that their card was a real or a fake cause.



Solutions to air pollution cards



Causes of Air Pollution cards

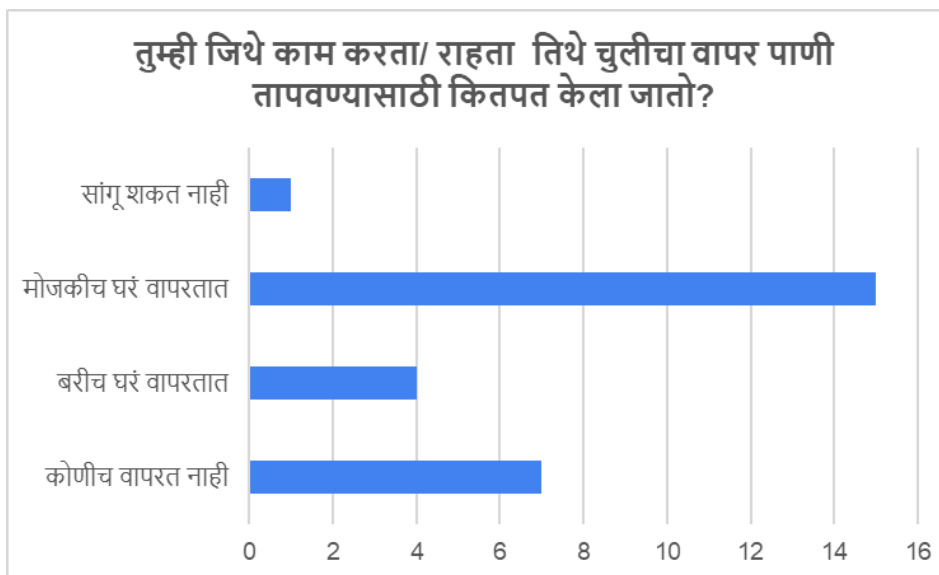
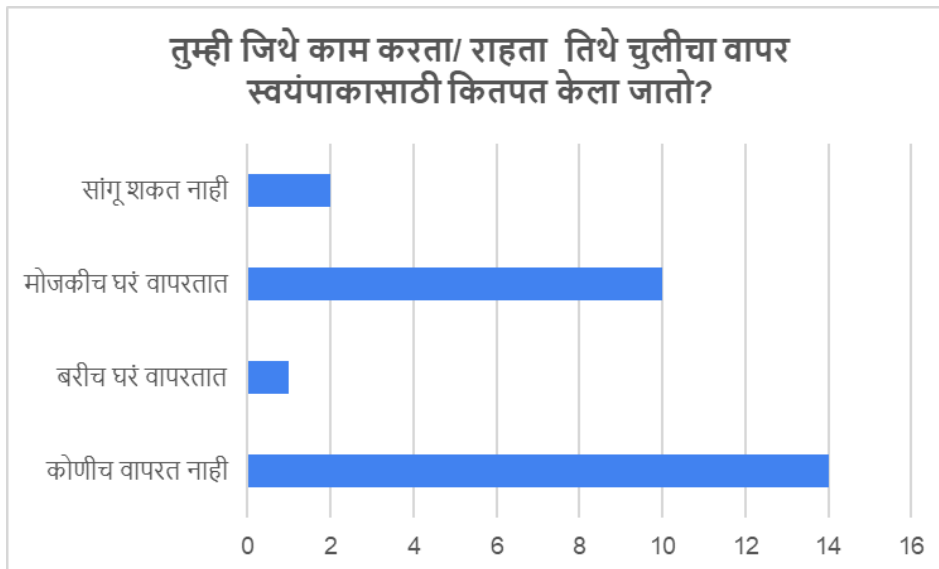
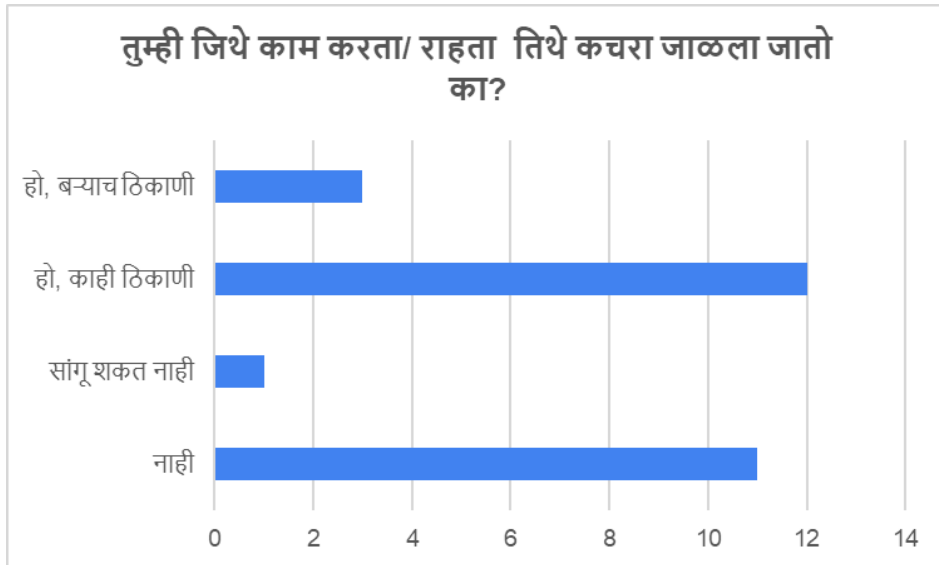


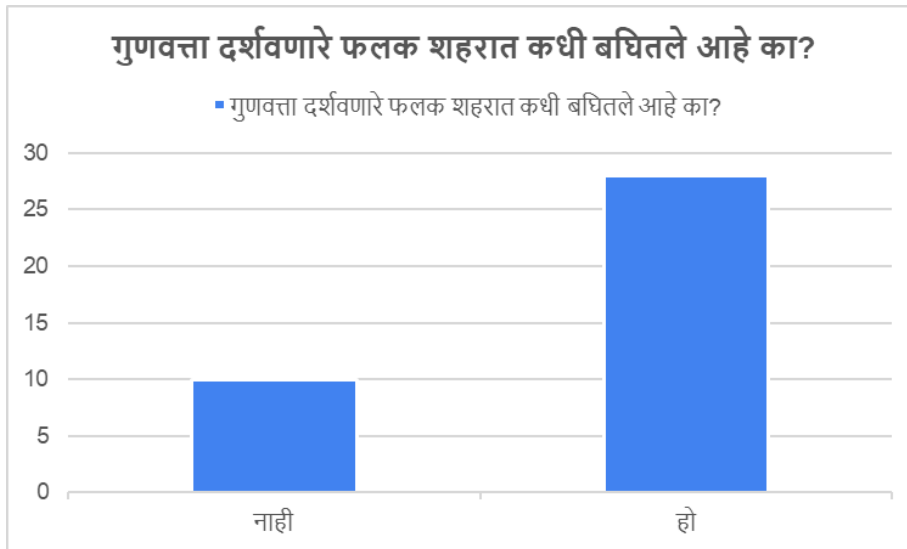
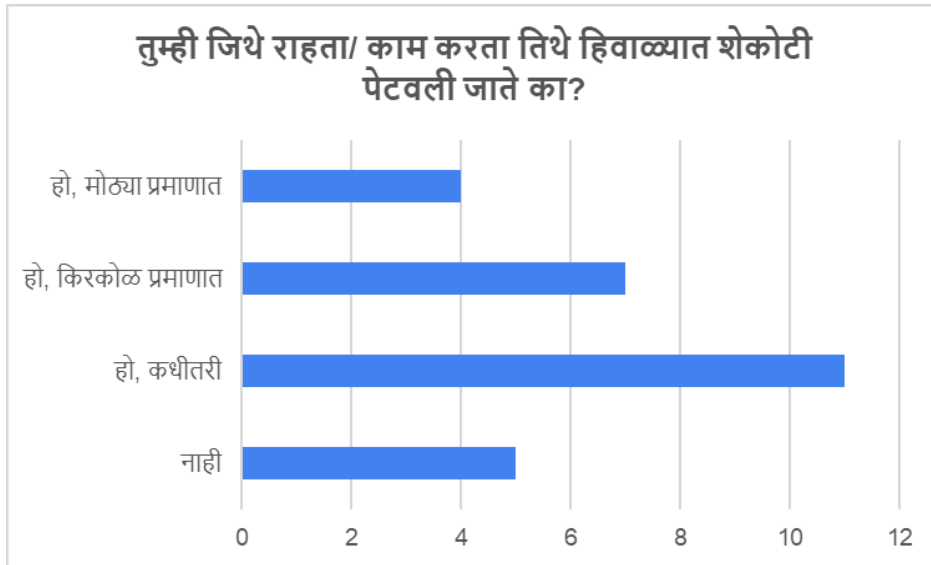
Once in groups, each one was asked to say why they felt the way they did. This activity allowed them to ideate on their own and come up with the real causes, clarifying any doubts in the process and ensuring better retention. Same process was repeated for the solutions, and this was quite interesting because the cards had certain pictures which had solutions like smog towers, information boards and so on. The solutions round yielded a good discussion amongst the women, clearly bringing out linkages between sustainable transport, waste management and also throwing light on how to gauge effectiveness of so-called solutions.

Results from the pre and post survey

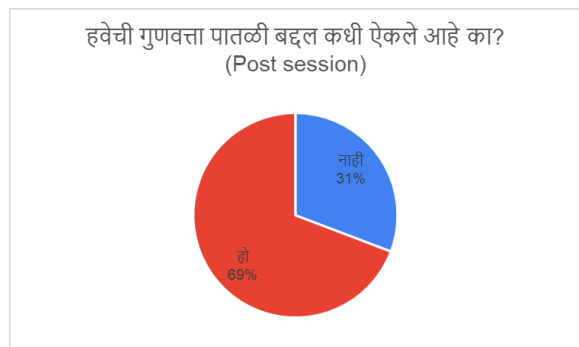
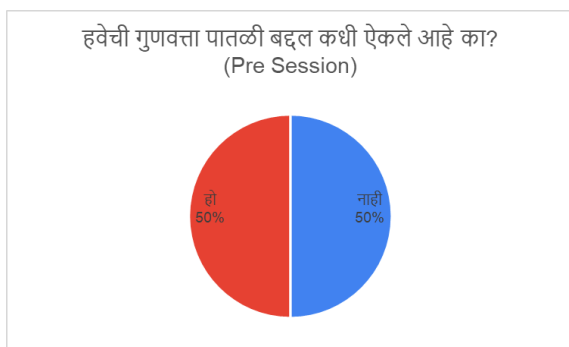
Questions for general information (non-comparative)

These questions were asked to know about the incidence of certain things where they work and live. When asked about the incidence of waste burning, most of them had seen it happen in their vicinity. The women said that almost none to very few used wood burning for cooking. Burning for heating water also happened in some houses in their area. They also said that bonfires during winter for heat are common.

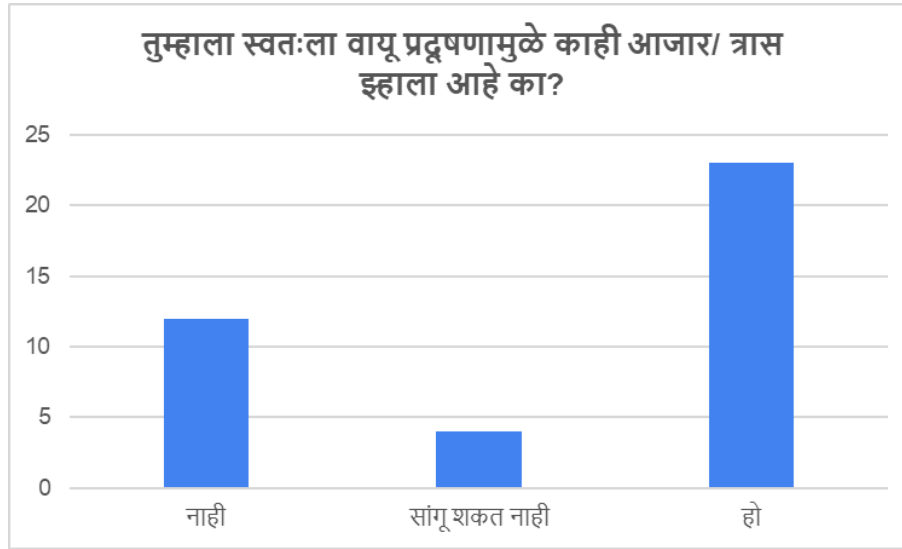




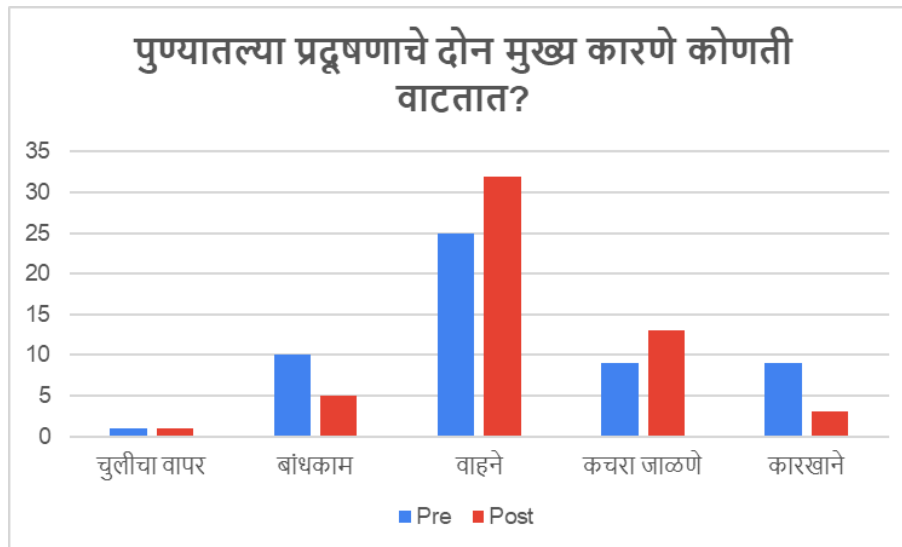
Comparative Analysis



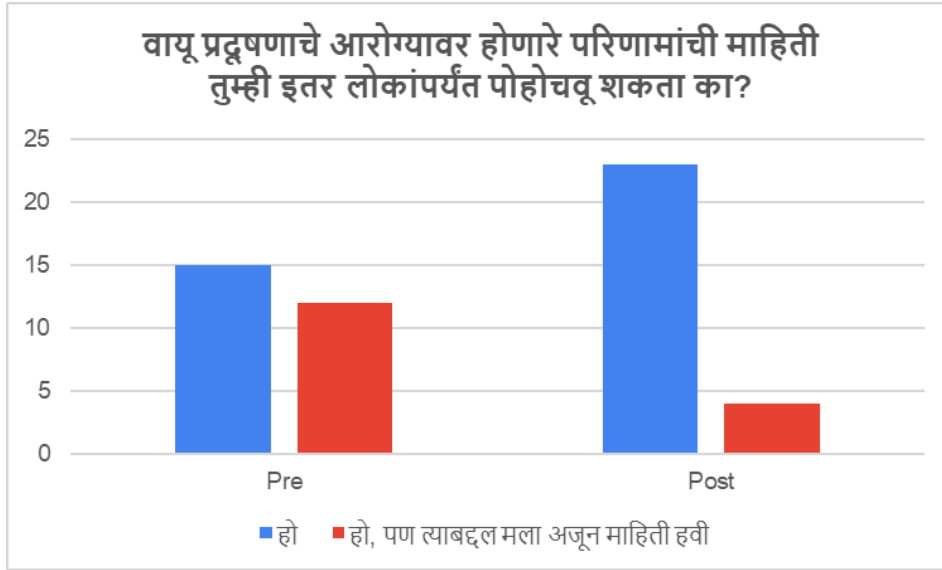
While half of the women said they had heard/ read of AQI before the session, almost 20% more said they now knew about AQI post the session.



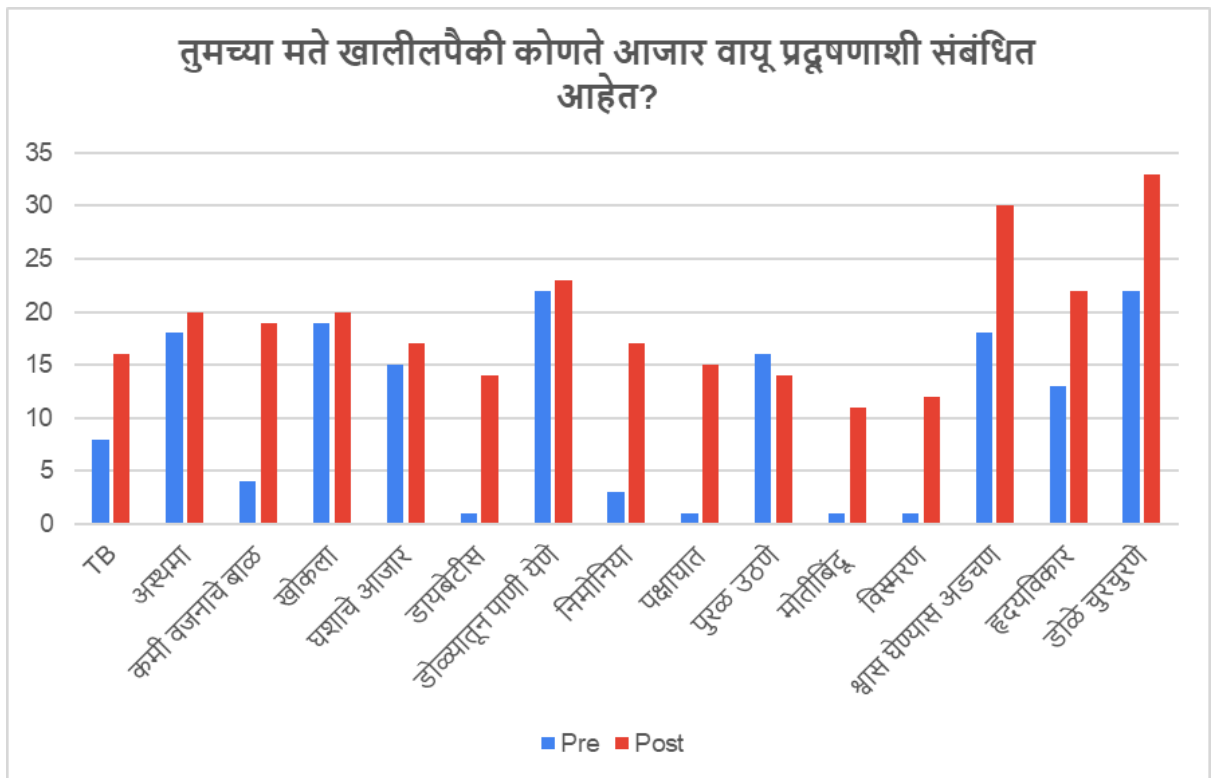
More than half of the women said that they experienced health issues due to air pollution. On discussion, all these issues were respiratory disorders and allergies and irritation of eyes, nose and skin.



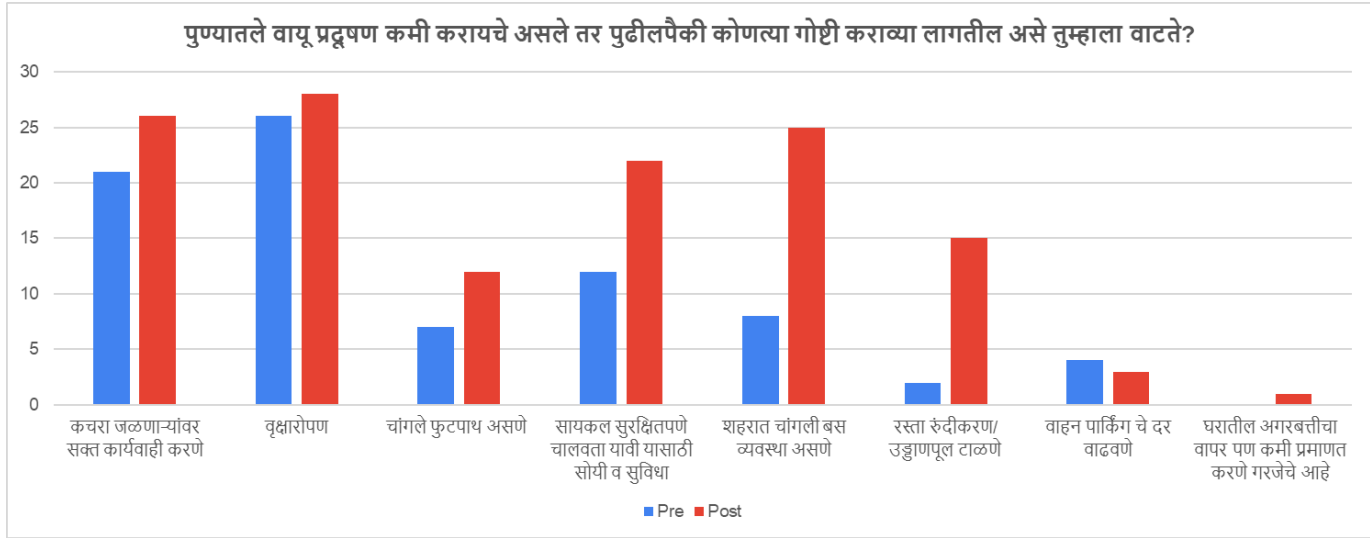
Post session, after explanation of linkages between air pollution and different sectors, more women voted for waste management and vehicles. While industries are polluting, the question was specific to Pune and hence the answers varied.



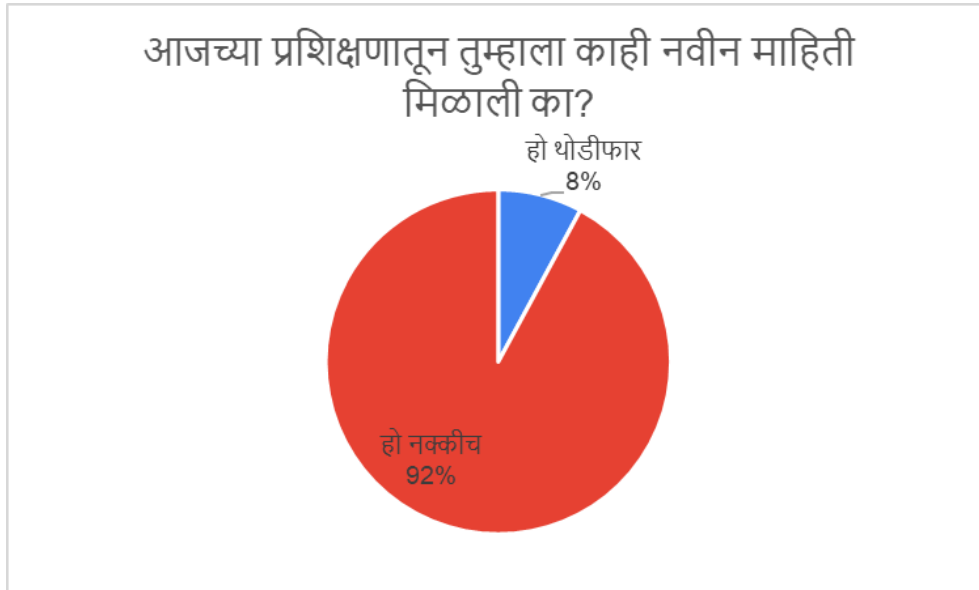
Before the session, women said that they are willing to share information on air quality but need more information themselves to do this. After the session they felt confident of sharing information on health impacts of air pollution.



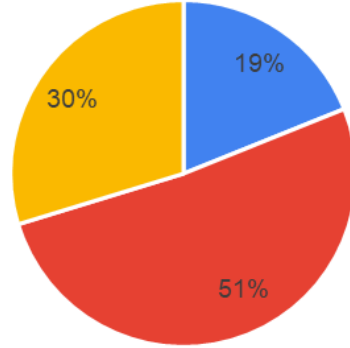
While the ASHA workers were aware of certain health impacts of air pollution, the graph makes it evident that they understood the lesser known health impacts after the session. These include diabetes, loss of memory, cataract, heart disease, pneumonia, low birth weight, paralysis and so on. The intention here was not to memorise which diseases can happen due to air pollution but to understand that air pollution affects the functioning of our bodies in different ways and can manifest in many disorders.



While the women identified vehicles as a major source of air pollution even before the session, when asked about solutions they did not necessarily link lesser pollution with sustainable transportation options. The card game allowed the women to work out this logic and be able to link reducing vehicles to availability of better public transport and better walking and cycling facilities in Pune.



पुढे असे प्रशिक्षण घ्यायचे असेल तर काय विषय
जाणून घ्यायला आवडेल?



- परिवहन आणि वायू प्रदूषण
- वायू प्रदूषण मोजणे, एअर क्वालिटी इंडेक्स आणि त्याचे आरोग्याशी संबंध
- स्वच्छता (कचरा व्यवस्थापन) आणि वायू प्रदूषण

Women showed interest in having more sessions and a majority of them wanted to know more about AQI and health impacts.