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Pollution causes stress, says survey

If you find yourself stressed and angry in the evenings after returning home, blame it on the enhanced pollution levels in your locality. A survey by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, has proved that increased pollution has an effect on the mind and could lead to behavioural changes. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents of the survey, conducted last month in 14 wards of Bengaluru, said that their husband was a 'better behaved man' on weekends when he did not have to venture out to work in a polluted environment. The stress levels on a day-to-day basis are higher in those households whose inhabitants need to commute more than 12 km. The researchers say that vehicular pollution, which emits carbon monoxide, increases stress levels once inhaled and get mixed with hemoglobin. Dr T V Ramachandra from the Energy and Wetland Research Group of IISc, who headed the survey, said that the project intended to look into the social aspects driven by enhanced pollution levels in Bengaluru. He pointed out that majority of the respondents admitted that they perceived change in behavior among the family members who venture out for work. "The vehicular pollution has doubled in the last decade. In the past few years, where large trees were chopped down, the amount of particulate matter in the atmosphere has gone up. In this regard we wanted to gauge the stress levels of Bangaloreans who have no choice but to pass through the polluted junctions and roads every day," Dr Ramachandra said. The city was divided into 12-14 sections and the wards were picked from all directions. The respondents were asked questions based on their use of cars, two-wheelers and other modes of transport. The researchers chose houses randomly from all walks of life and in total 600 people were tapped for the survey. The researchers are now calling for urgent action from the government before it's too late. "Before the CNG era, one could get eye and skin irritation the moment you land in New Delhi. But today it seems the cleanest city when it comes to vehicular pollution. The government must implement a sustainable transport policy and strict guidelines so that pollution levels are under control," Dr Ramachandra said.

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