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### Poor households spend more on water, says study

- [K. Lakshmi](#)



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*Residents of low-income households spend up to 15 per cent of their income on daily water requirements.*

In a bid to cope with the gap in water supply, residents of low-income households spend up to 15 per cent of their income on daily water requirements.

This was one of the findings of a recent study by the Department of Management Studies and Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT-Madras. According to the study, on an average, households with piped water supply spend Rs. 553 a month and families that do not have piped water supply incur a monthly expense of Rs. 658. This includes money spent on various strategies — be it collection, purchase or treatment and storage.

At present, Chennai is supplied with 580 million litres on alternate days owing to a dip in resources. This has caused a dent in the budgets of households, especially of those with a monthly income of less than Rs. 20,000. People with low incomes tend to spend anywhere between one per cent and 15 per cent of their total income on water needs. This monthly cost to cope up with the gap in supply is less among the higher income group, according to the study.

R.K. Amit, assistant professor, Department of Management Studies, who was part of the study along with S. Subash of IIT-Madras, said, “This is because households with high income levels invest in borewells, which is a long-term strategy, along with purchasing packaged drinking water. We have also taken into account the time spent by people belonging to low income groups in collecting and storing water.”

On an average, nearly 2,250 minutes per month is spent by a family on collecting water and this too adds to the costs incurred indirectly.

The study also revealed that the households surveyed had a strong preference for packaged drinking water and described it as reliable source. Several participants also noted that the quality of water was poor from all sources.

The study, supported by South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics, is based on the data collected from 423 households spread over 12 wards, which is representative of both piped and non-piped supply areas.

To help residents gain access to safe drinking water, the government must invest more in water supply infrastructure and cover more areas with piped water supply, Mr. Amit added.

