

SDC Foundation Rapid Survey Report

Impact of Gas Cylinder Crisis on Food Businesses in Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Date of Survey: 25–26 March 2026

Rapid Survey Size : 10 Food Business Operators (FBOs)

Location: Rajpur Road, Dehradun

Conducted by: Praveen Upreti and Pyare Lal, SDC Foundation

www.sdcuk.in

Dehradun - 248 006
Uttarakhand

1. Introduction

The food service sector forms a critical part of Dehradun's urban economy, supporting livelihoods, tourism, and everyday social life. From small cafes and sweet shops to restaurants and hotels, these establishments rely heavily on uninterrupted fuel supply to sustain operations.

In recent weeks, disruptions in the availability of LPG cylinders have emerged as a serious concern for food businesses across the city. Given the dependence on LPG for cooking and food preparation, even short-term disruptions can significantly affect operations, revenues, and employment.

In this context, SDC Foundation undertook a rapid, field-based survey to understand the on ground impact of the ongoing gas cylinder crisis. The survey was conducted over two days 25 and 26 March 2026 across 10 food outlets on Rajpur Road, one of Dehradun's busiest commercial stretches.

This report presents a data-driven yet descriptive account of the findings, highlighting not only the scale of disruption but also the coping strategies, emerging trends, and future concerns of local businesses.

2. Goal and Intent of the Survey

The primary aim of this rapid survey was to capture real-time, evidence-based insights into how the gas cylinder crisis is affecting food businesses in Dehradun.

The survey sought to:

- Quantify the extent of operational disruption
- Understand changes in revenue, costs, and service delivery
- Document how businesses are adapting to the crisis
- Identify alternative solutions being explored
- Capture market sentiment and future outlook

Beyond immediate impacts, the survey also aimed to build a broader understanding of how such disruptions influence business resilience, particularly among small and medium establishments.

The findings are intended to inform policy discussions, support advocacy efforts, and ensure that the concerns of local businesses are effectively communicated to government authorities, media, and the wider public.

3. Methodology

The survey was conducted through direct, in-person interactions with food business outlets. Respondents were primarily managers or in-charge personnel.

A structured questionnaire was used, divided into seven sections:

1. Basic Information
2. Gas Dependency & Disruption
3. Operational Impact
4. Coping Mechanisms
5. Future Adaptation
6. Market Sentiment
7. Key Concerns

Sample Size: 10 outlets

Area Covered: Rajpur Road, Dehradun

Disclaimer: Since responses were provided by managers or operational staff, there is a possibility that responses may differ if provided by business owners.

4. Profile of Surveyed Businesses

The survey covered a mix of food establishments:

- 4 Cafes
- 3 Restaurants
- 2 Sweet Shops
- 1 Hotel

This reflects a diverse cross-section of the food service ecosystem.

In terms of scale, most businesses were small:

- 6 outlets served fewer than 100 customers daily (pre-crisis)
- 3 outlets served between 100–200 customers
- Only 1 outlet served 200–300 customers

This indicates that a majority of businesses operate on relatively thin margins and are therefore more vulnerable to disruptions.

5. Gas Dependency and Nature of Disruption

LPG cylinders remain a critical energy source for most establishments:

- 10 out of 10 outlets reported using LPG
- 9 also reported using electric appliances in some capacity

However, dependency levels varied:

- 2 outlets were fully dependent on LPG
- 4 had high dependency (75–99%)
- 4 had partial dependency (below 50%)

In terms of disruption duration:

- 5 businesses reported issues for 2–4 weeks
- 3 for 1–2 weeks
- 2 for more than a month

This indicates that the crisis is not short-term but has persisted long enough to impact operations significantly.

6. Operational Impact on Businesses

The impact of the crisis is universal:

- 100% of surveyed businesses reported being affected

Revenue Impact

- 5 businesses reported 25–50% decline
- 3 reported 10–25% decline
- 1 reported over 50% loss
- 1 reported below 10% loss

This suggests a significant financial strain, especially for smaller establishments.

Operational Adjustments

- Out of 10 FBO, 8 have reduced menu items
- Out of 10 FBO, 3 have reduced operating hours

Menu reduction has emerged as the most common strategy, allowing businesses to continue operations while conserving fuel.

Cost Implications

Interestingly:

- 7 businesses reported no increase in costs
- 3 reported minor increases (below ₹500/day)

This suggests that businesses are absorbing losses rather than passing them on to customers.

7. Coping Mechanisms and Adaptation

Businesses have adopted several strategies to manage the crisis:

- Reducing menu items (8)
- Using backup cylinders (2)
- Switching to alternative fuels (2)

- Increasing prices (1)

Additionally:

- 9 out of 10 businesses have explored alternative cooking methods

Alternatives Being Used

- Induction cooktops: 5
- Electric appliances: 4

This indicates a gradual shift toward electrification, though still at an early stage.

8. Future Adaptation Plans

Looking ahead, businesses are considering longer-term adjustments:

- 6 prefer hybrid systems (LPG + electric)
- 3 are considering fully electric cooking
- 1 plans no change

Barriers

- 100% cited high cost as the biggest barrier

This highlights the need for financial and policy support for transition.

9. Market Sentiment

Despite operational challenges:

- Customer demand remains stable (no change reported by all respondents)

However:

- 100% of businesses expressed uncertainty about the next 1–2 months

This reflects a fragile balance between stable demand and operational stress.

10. Key Concerns

The most pressing concern is:

- Supply uncertainty (100%)

Other concerns include:

- Potential loss of customers (20%)

11. Additional Observations

Field interactions revealed deeper impacts:

- In some outlets, staff meals have been discontinued
- Businesses are prioritizing customer service over internal welfare
- Operators are under stress but continuing operations to avoid closure

12. Key Takeaways

1. The crisis has universal impact across food businesses
2. LPG remains indispensable despite partial alternatives
3. Revenue losses are significant and widespread
4. Businesses are coping through internal adjustments rather than external changes
5. There is a clear shift towards electric cooking, though limited by cost
6. Supply reliability is the most critical issue
7. The sector faces high uncertainty despite stable demand

13. Policy Implications

The findings highlight the need for:

- Reliable LPG supply chains
- Financial support for alternative energy adoption
- Expansion of PNG infrastructure
- Promotion of energy-efficient technologies
- Targeted support for small businesses

14. Conclusion

The gas cylinder crisis represents a critical stress point for Dehradun's food business ecosystem. While businesses are demonstrating resilience and adaptability, the current coping mechanisms may not be sustainable in the long term.

Without timely intervention, prolonged disruption could lead to deeper economic impacts, particularly for small establishments.

This rapid survey provides a snapshot of ground realities and underscores the urgency of coordinated policy action to ensure stability, resilience, and sustainable transition.

SDC Foundation Rapid Survey Questionnaire

Impact of Gas Cylinder Crisis on Food Businesses in Dehradun, Uttarakhand

www.sdcuk.in

Section 1: Basic Information

1. Name of Outlet (Optional): _____
2. Type of Business:
 Restaurant Dhaba Cafe Cloud Kitchen Bakery Other: _____
3. Location/Area: _____
4. Average Daily Customers (pre-crisis):
 <100 100–200 200–300 300+

Section 2: Gas Dependency & Disruption

5. What is your primary cooking fuel?
 LPG Cylinder PNG Electric Other: _____
6. Level of dependency on LPG cylinders:
 100% 75–99% 50–74% <50%
7. Since when have you been facing gas supply issues?
 <1 week 1–2 weeks 2–4 weeks >1 month

Section 3: Operational Impact

8. Has your business been affected due to the crisis?
 Yes No
9. Estimated reduction in business (revenue):
 <10% 10–25% 25–50% >50%
10. Have you reduced operating hours?
 Yes No
11. Have you reduced menu items due to gas shortage?
 Yes No
12. Approximate increase in daily operating cost (₹):
 No increase <Rs 5000 Rs 5000–10000 Rs 10000+

Section 4: Coping Mechanisms

13. How are you currently managing the crisis? (Multiple choice)

- Using additional/backup cylinders
- Borrowing from other vendors
- Reducing menu
- Increasing prices
- Switching to alternate fuels
- Temporary closure (partial/full)

14. Have you explored alternative cooking options?

- Yes No

15. If Yes, what options have you tried?

- Electric appliances
- PNG connection
- Induction/Hot plates
- Coal/Wood
- Other: _____

Section 5: Future Adaptation

16. What alternatives are you considering for the future? (Multiple choice)

- PNG connection
- Electric cooking
- Solar-based solutions
- Hybrid system (LPG + Electric)
- No change planned

17. What are the biggest barriers to switching?

- High cost Lack of infrastructure Reliability concerns Space constraints Lack of information

Section 6: Market Sentiment

18. How has customer demand changed?

- Increased No change Decreased

19. Overall business sentiment for next 1–2 months:

- Optimistic Uncertain Pessimistic

Section 7: Key Concerns & Suggestions

20. What is your biggest concern right now?

- Supply uncertainty Rising costs Loss of customers Staff issues Other: _____

Expected Support from the Govt (Open Ended & Brief)

What support do you expect from the government? (Open Ended & brief)

Goal and Intent of Rapid Survey

This rapid survey by SDC Foundation aims to capture real-time and data-driven insights on how the ongoing gas cylinder crisis is impacting food businesses across Dehradun. By engaging directly with food business outlets, the survey seeks to quantify disruptions in operations, changes in costs, and the extent of revenue loss. The objective is to build a clear and evidence-based understanding of the scale and nature of the crisis on the ground.

The survey also focuses on understanding how businesses are coping with the situation, including immediate adjustments and alternative solutions being explored. It aims to document shifts towards options such as electric cooking, PNG connections, or hybrid systems, while also identifying key barriers like cost, infrastructure, and reliability. Additionally, it captures market sentiment, including customer demand trends and business outlook for the near future.

The findings from this survey will be used to highlight key challenges, inform policy discussions and advocate for practical interventions. By sharing these insights with relevant government authorities, media and public at large, SDC Foundation seeks to ensure that the concerns of local businesses are heard and addressed. Ultimately, the goal is to support the development of sustainable and business-friendly solutions during this crisis.

About SDC Foundation:

Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation Society is a Dehradun based advocacy and action group engaged in communication, capacity building and community mobilization in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. With over eight years of experience, the organization focuses on communication, capacity building, and community mobilization around environmental and social issues. It has a long and proven track record of implementing projects and programs in areas such as plastic waste management, community engagement, behavior change communication and sustainable urbanization.

SDC Foundation is actively engaged in producing a range of climate documentation, reports, and knowledge resources that spotlight the intersection of environmental sustainability and community resilience in Uttarakhand. These include monthly editions of the UDAAI (Uttarakhand Disaster and Accident Analysis Initiative) reports that track climate-induced disasters and accidents across the state. Taking this initiative further, it has published two books in its Making Molehills of Mountains (2023 and 2024 editions) series. SDC Foundation has also been at the forefront of creating knowledge resources such as its annual Uttarakhand centric Swachh Survekshan reports and Uttarakhand Char Dham Yatra reports. Through such initiatives, SDC Foundation continues to highlight the intersection of sustainability, governance, and community resilience in Uttarakhand.