

## Elderly Population in India

### Why in news?

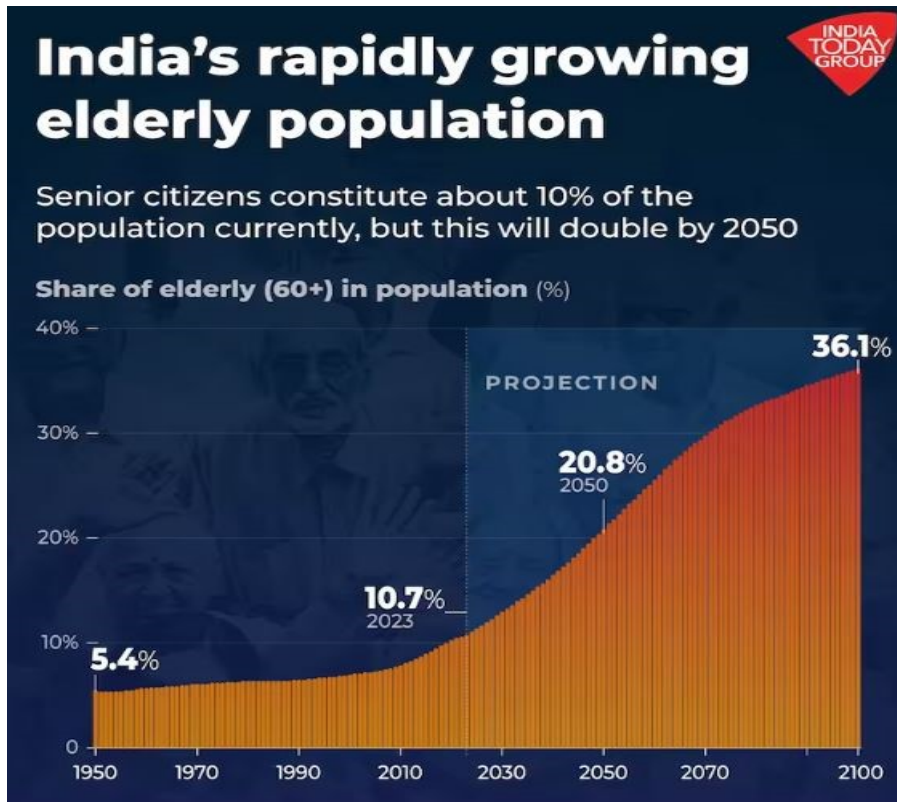
Amidst the focus on demographic dividend, the country is seeing a silent rise in its elderly demographic and increased problems caused by loneliness in later life.

### What is the Status of Elderly Population in India?

- **Demographic ageing** - It is a global phenomenon of increasing elderly population which has hit Indian shores as well.
- It is possible due to
  - Easy availability of life saving drugs
  - Control of famines and various communicable diseases
  - Better awareness and supply of nutrition and health facilities
  - Comparatively better overall standard of living.
- **Elderly population** - The WHO defines those aged 60 -74 years as elderly.
- In 1980 the UN recommended 60 years as the age of transition for the elderly segment of the population, and has been categorized as follows:
  - **Young Old**- between the ages of 60-75 years.
  - **Old-Old**- between the ages of 75-85 years.
  - **Very Old**- 85 years and above

*The number of people 60 years and over in the globe is 673 million in 2005 and is expected to increase to 2 billion by 2050, almost a triple increase and the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 21st century is going to be called as '**The age of ageing**'.*

- **In India** - According to Population Census 2011 there are nearly 104 million elderly persons (aged 60 years or above) in India
  - 53 million females and 51 million males.
- It is expected to rise significantly from 100 million in 2011 to 230 million by 2036.
- By 2050, they are projected to make up nearly 20% of the total population.



- **Old age-dependence ratio** - It measures the number of people aged 60-plus per 100 persons aged 15-59, has been steadily increasing.
- **Elderly in India 2021' report** - According to this report of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the old-age dependency ratio increases in the following manner
  - 1961 - 10.9%
  - 2011 - 14.2%
- It is anticipated to have reach 15.7% in 2021 and 20.1% by 2031.

## What are the concerns of elderly population?

- **Disabilities** - Old age implies increasing physical, mental and psychological disabilities.
- **Health concerns** - Health issues like blindness, locomotor disabilities and deafness are most prevalent.
- Absence of geriatric care facilities at hospitals in rural area.
- **Economic problems** - Economic dependence is one of the major factors that very often affects the wellbeing of older persons.
- The functional ability status of the care receiver and care giver is an additional factor that appears to contribute to the burden.
- **Exacerbated class disparities** - The market offers a wide and innovative array of eldercare services.
- However, this is not accessible to those who cannot afford these services.
- **Increased loneliness** - The Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) in 2017-18 surveyed 72,000 people from 35 States and Union Territories.
- 20.5% of adults aged 45 years and above reported moderate loneliness, and 13.3% were severely lonely.

To know more about Loneliness, click [here](#)

### How loneliness can be addressed among elderly population?

- **Encouraging familial responsibilities** - Families shall be encouraged to undertake the *maximum amount of care work* possible.
- **Moving to care homes** - In this way, one can *live with others from similar backgrounds* and be free from arranging daily care for oneself.
- **Joining social forums** - Joining offline or online forums to *socialise with those from the same age group*.
- **Promoting intergenerational bonding**- Many old people in care homes believed *interacting with young students was enjoyable and alleviated feelings of loneliness* to some extent.
- **Purchasing companionship services** - It involves younger people to provide companionship services to older clients.
  - **For example: Pronam** is a public-private partnership in Kolkata, catering to the needs of older people who do not live with their relatives.

#### Companionship Services

- **Companions** - Younger people
- **Function** - These companions function as *proxies for people's children* and undertake different types of work.
  - **For instance:** Paying electricity bills, providing reminders for medicines and taking them out on walks or to the doctor.
- **Establishing trust** - Care companions build an *emotional connection* with the people they look after and many clients look forward to their visits and become dependent on them.
- *Regular visits* to check on the wellbeing of older people even without forming strong bonds can also be a useful measure to tackle loneliness.

### What are the initiatives taken by India?

- **Constitutional measures** - Article 41 and Article 46 are the constitutional provisions for elderly persons.

**Article 41** of the Indian Constitution directs the state to secure the right to work, education and public assistance in certain cases such as unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement.

**Article 42** of the Indian Constitution direct the State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

- **Legislative measures** - *Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007* provides legal sanctions to the rights of the elderly.
- Section 20 of *Hindu Marriage and Adoption Act, 1956* makes it obligatory provisions to maintain an aged parents.
- Under *Section 125 of Criminal Procedure Code*, the elder parents can claim maintenance from their children.

- **Financial measures** - The expenditure for implementation of the various scheme is being met from the "*Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund*".
- **Policy measures** - National Policy for Older Persons Year 1999 - It is launched for accelerating welfare measures and empowering the elderly in ways beneficial to them.
- **Atal Vayo Abhyudaya Yojana (AVYAY)** - It is a comprehensive initiative aimed at ensuring a *dignified life for senior citizens* in India.
- It *recognizes the contributions made by the elderly* to society and seeks to ensure their well-being and social inclusion.
- **Senior care Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE)** - It aims to *help startups* interested in providing services for elderly care.
- **Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens** - Its primary objective is to *improve the quality of life* of the old-age population.
- It provides *financial support* for running and maintaining elderly Homes, Continuous Care Homes, Mobile Medicare Units, etc.
- **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana**- It aims to *provide Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices* for Senior citizens belonging to BPL category.

### Way forward

- Recognizing loneliness as a public health concern and adapt strategies to support those affected by this growing issue.
- Enhance mental health awareness by improving healthcare facilities, and addressing social disparities.
- Take a comprehensive surveys in local languages can uncover the extent of loneliness across India's diverse population.

*The year 1999 was declared by the UN as the International Year of Older Persons.*

### References

1. [Down to Earth | Burden of loneliness](#)
2. [Lok Sabha| Needs and Priorities of Senior Citizens](#)
3. [Yojana| Problems of Aged Population](#)