



Sankala Foundation

National Human Rights Commission, India

in collaboration with

NITI Aayog

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Government of India



**Seminar**

on

# Ageing in India: Actionable Solutions

Drawing insights from global, regional,  
and national best practices

**Concept Note**



**Date**

18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

**Time**

9:30 am onwards



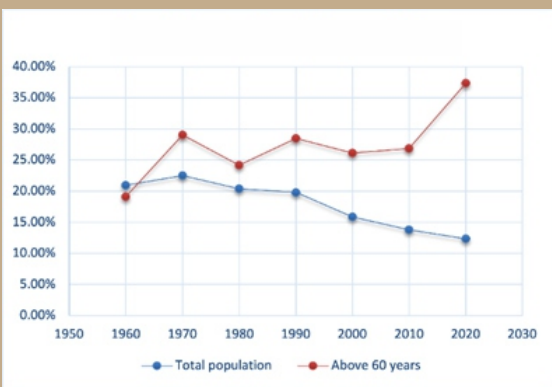
**Venue**

Maple Room,  
India Habitat Centre,  
New Delhi

## Background

The world is undergoing an unprecedented demographic shift, with populations ageing rapidly, both globally and in countries like India. Three important demographic changes are leading to this shift in age structures, i.e., falling fertility rates, declining mortality, and an increasing life expectancy. In 2018, for the first time in history, people aged 65 years and above outnumbered children under the age of 5. By 2050, the number of people aged 60 and above is expected to more than double, reaching nearly 2.1 billion, comprising 22% of the global population.

Figure 1: Decadal growth rate of population (Global)



Source: World Population Prospects, 2022

Although every country undergoes demographic changes, they experience different phases of these shifts at varying times, depending on their respective fertility and mortality trends. High-income nations were the first to witness a shift in age structures towards an ageing population. The older population is significantly different from people in other age groups, associated closely with several changes such as greater health problems, increased need for care, financial vulnerability and physical immobility, among others.

## Global Policies and Practices to Address Ageing

In the context of lower workforce participation and a shrinking labour force, a key policy measure has been to increase retirement age. Singapore and France have raised their retirement age to 64, while Japan has increased it to 70. Countries such as the United States, Finland, and various European nations have implemented immigration systems to address labour shortages. Additionally, to enhance productivity, countries like Singapore and the United Kingdom have introduced reskilling and upskilling initiatives in collaboration with industry players.

To address the varied healthcare needs of the elderly, an integrated comprehensive healthcare approach is being adopted by many countries. For example, the National Health Service, United Kingdom, covers the full cost of healthcare, some equipment and home adaptations, including home-based care for the elderly who suffer from severe illnesses and disabilities. Additionally, many countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea, have introduced Long-term care insurances, aimed at helping elderly who require assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADL).

Social needs of the elderly often take a backseat to their economic and health requirements. In this context, 'ageing at home' has been given utmost emphasis. Singapore, for instance, gives priority in housing allocation to children who reside with their parents. Alternatively, initiatives have also been developed to provide respite care.

## Ageing in India

In developing countries, ageing is taking place at an unprecedented pace. While the doubling of the elderly population took nearly 150-200 years in developed countries, it is happening in just 50-70 years in most developing countries. This can be largely attributed to benefits from the rapid exchange of advanced technology leading to improvements in health outcomes. India too, experienced rapid improvement in fertility, reduced infant mortality, and increased life expectancy. These factors have led to an unprecedented increase in the proportion as well as the absolute size of the elderly population in the country.

As observed from findings of the Census of India, elderly persons (above 60 years) rose from 24.7 million in 1961 to 103.8 million by 2011. This represents more than a four-fold increase in the elderly population in just 50 years. As of 2022, the number of people over the age of 60 in India was close to 149 million, comprising 10.5% of the total population. By 2050, it is expected that the share of elderly persons in India will increase to 20.8%, or approximately 347 million individuals (UNFPA, 2023), making it one of the fastest-growing elderly populations. Moreover, Indian households are witnessing a shift from traditional joint families to nuclear families, leading to a much greater number of elderly living alone, without the support of their children. Simultaneously, migration, both foreign and domestic, in search of

better economic opportunities, often leaves elderly alone to fend for themselves. An ageing population presents several challenges and opportunities, impacting individuals and society as a whole.

As per Census of India, 2011, Kerala (12.6%) had the highest proportion of elderly citizens, followed by Goa and Tamil Nadu. State-wise data on elderly population reports Kerala to have sustained its position at the top, with an estimated elderly population of 16.5% in 2021. On the other hand, Bihar (7.7%), Uttar Pradesh (8.2%), and Assam (8.2%) reported the lowest proportions of elderly.

Figure 2: Life expectancy and total fertility rate, India, 1950-2050

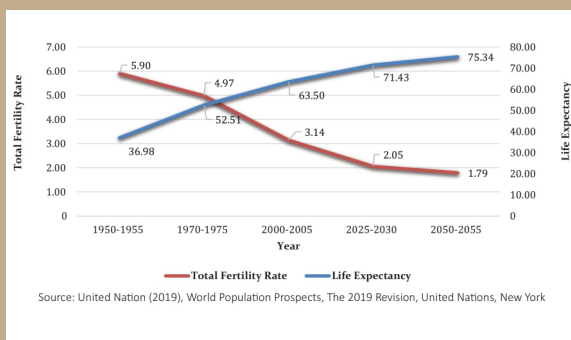


Figure source: LASI Wave-1, 2017-18, India Report

## Policy Framework to Support the Elderly in India

### Role of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, being the nodal ministry in this domain has recognised the need to address the challenges posed by its ageing population through various policies and programmes. A significant step in this direction was the enactment of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, which lays down legal provisions for the maintenance and support of elderly individuals, ensuring their social and financial security.

Additionally, the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP), introduced in 1999, serves as the foundation for state interventions, focusing on providing financial security, healthcare, shelter, and protection against abuse for older adults. In terms of healthcare, the National Programme for the Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE), launched in 2011,

focuses on providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality healthcare services to older individuals.

### Role of NITI Aayog

As the premier policy think tank of the government of India, NITI Aayog has been a key contributor in oversight and implementation of SDG 3 aiming to 'ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages'. With a growing elderly population, NITI Aayog has been asserting greater attention to addressing their healthcare needs, arising from a greater burden of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and heart diseases, amongst others.

NITI Aayog also released a position paper titled 'Senior Care Reforms in India: Reimagining the Senior Care Paradigm' in February, 2024. The paper has been crucial in outlining the existing services available to the elderly and the gaps in elderly care that need to be addressed. This includes four major frontiers; health, social, financial, and digital inclusion of the elderly.

### Role of National Human Rights Commission, India

The National Human Rights Commission plays a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of older persons in India. It investigates complaints of neglect, abuse, and discrimination faced by senior citizens, ensuring their grievances are addressed. The NHRC has established a Core Group on Rights of Older Persons. This group is dedicated to reviewing existing policies and laws, identifying gaps in the framework, and suggesting measures to better protect the rights of older persons.

The NHRC recently conducted a National Conference on Rights of Older Persons, with the theme—Assessing the Structural Framework, Legal Safeguards, Social Security Rights and Institutional Protection of India's Elderly. The conference was attended by government representatives and domain experts who discussed the various challenges faced by the growing elderly population.

### Role of Sankala Foundation

Sankala Foundation is a non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing research, training, and advocacy in the field of climate and sustainability. Transforming public health care is one of the core priorities of the Foundation. Post the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for a more resilient healthcare system has become abundantly clear. The health

sector faces several challenges, such as affordability and accessibility concerns, poor infrastructure, shortage of skilled health personnel, and low coverage of insurance. Sankala Foundation seeks to identify sustainable, practical, and replicable solutions that can address key gaps in the country's health system and improve the overall well-being of people.

## Seminar on 'Ageing in India: Actionable Solutions'

The seminar on 'Ageing in India: Actionable Solutions' is an effort by the Sankala Foundation to complement the recently held National Conference by NHRC, India, which identified some key challenges faced by India's older persons. The seminar shall identify models which can address the economic, healthcare, and social needs of the elderly.

### Key themes of discussion

- 1. Addressing the health and nutritional needs of the elderly**
  - Healthy ageing
  - Integrated healthcare and long-term care
  - Mental health services
  - Caregiving and respite care

- 2. Economic security, social inclusion and quality of life**

- Strengthen pension systems
- Opportunities for meaningful engagement
- Address gender-sensitive social protection
- Ageism and intergenerational bonding

### Expected outcomes

The seminar aims to achieve several key outcomes

- 1. Actionable recommendations:** The seminar will develop a set of actionable recommendations that can inform future policy frameworks and social programmes, ensuring the dignity, health, and participation of older adults in society.
- 2. Collaborative network:** The seminar will foster partnerships among stakeholders, creating a network of professionals, researchers, and organisations working on ageing-related issues.

### Conclusion

As India and the world continue to experience a rapidly growing elderly population, it is essential to create sustainable, inclusive policies that promote healthy, productive, and dignified lives for older adults. Through thoughtful dialogue and collaboration, this roundtable aims to generate practical, evidence-based solutions that will enhance the lives of ageing populations in India and globally.

## Programme

9:00 - 9:30 am	Registration
9:30 - 10:00 am	Welcome remarks and agenda-setting
10:00 - 11:40 am	Session 1- Addressing the health and nutritional needs of the elderly Chair: Dr. V. K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog
11:40 am - 12:00 pm	Tea Break
12:00 - 2:00 pm	Session 2- Economic security, social inclusion and quality of life Chair: Mr. Amit Yadav, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
2:00 pm	Closing remarks followed by lunch



**Sankala Foundation**

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