

# Population Ageing in India- A Growing Concern

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**Submission date:** 27-Jan-2025 12:13AM (UTC-0800)

**Submission ID:** 2559698824

**File name:** IJAR-50040.docx (25.67K)

**Word count:** 1783

**Character count:** 9697

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**Abstract:** Population ageing is a global phenomenon. The population of elderly ( 60+) is increasing globally. The number of elderly is increasing faster than the general population across the world. The world population is not only increasing but also growing older due to increased life expectancies and decreased fertility rates across nearly all countries. Among South Asian countries, pace of ageing in India is moderate with the proportion of the aged increasing to 20% in 2050 and 36.1 percent in 2100. At present India is quite young having the advantage of youth bulge. India's population has a large percentage of young people. But undoubtedly, the relatively young India today will turn into a rapidly ageing society in the coming decades. The share of elderly people aged 60 years and above is increasing. Hence this is an area that has to be received adequate attention. Hence the present paper is focused on the problems of the ageing population and causes for the growth of elderly population and policy implications. The study of the size and composition of India's population is the most crucial factor for planning the purposes. In India the Total Fertility Rate ( TFR) was 6.18 in 1950 which is reduced to 4.60 in 1980 and further declined to 1.91 in 2021.

**Key Words:** Fertility Rate, Life Expectancy, Population Ageing, Family Dynamics

**Introduction :** The term ageing refers to the process of becoming older. It is a complex, multifaceted process that affects individuals, families, communities and societies as a whole. An ageing population refers to a demographic shift where the proportion of older individuals in a population increases significantly. Longitudinal Ageing Study(LASI) in India 2016 points out that 3 major factors driving the growing share of senior citizens in India, declining fertility rates due to increased access to contraceptives, increasing age of marriage and declining infant mortality, increasing longevity due to improvements in medicine and nutrition. LASI 2021 states that population ageing in India is inevitable and the country is currently ill-prepared to deal with the expanding and evolving needs of older adults. While ageing is a global issue UN estimates that by 2050, one in 6 people will be over the age of 65 years compared with one in 11 in 2019. India is ageing before becoming rich, unlike countries in the west or Japan. Here longevity is increasing much faster than economic development. According to World Population Prospects 2022 Projects, Japan, China, Indonesia and VietNam Will be experiencing high to very high growth of the elderly population in the future which can go beyond 40% of their total population. By 2050, one in every five individuals will be an elderly in India.

## Review of Literature

**Dharmalingam. A. (1994)** analysed future expectations of support in old age and current conditions of living among the elderly in a South Indian village. Elderly are in a worse economic situation. The poor and women are most affected in terms of old age support. Children are the traditional means of support in old age, are becoming less reliable as a result of recent economic and social changes.

**V. Kumar (1997)** mentioned in the study that the traditional support of extended families is rapidly undergoing erosion making the elderly vulnerable and leading more emotional and psychological problems.

**P.S. Nair (2010)** observed in the study that high tempo of population ageing in Kerala, increasing widowhood, higher life expectancy of females, deplorable economic status of widows, absence of family support and social security system. Ageing of population can result in reduced savings and investments due to the rising burden of diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and lung diseases and result in health care expenditures.

**Arunika Agarwal et. al. (2016)** The study reveals that demographic shift poses massive and complex challenges to Indian society in the form of rising burden of noncommunicable diseases, a vulnerable female-heavy older adult Population, a changing family structure and a lack of a social safety net.

**K. Thampi (2024)** studied attitude and perceptions of Older adults towards aging in place and mentioned that the creation of more sustainable and effective practices that can make aging in place a healthy living strategy for older adults.

### Objectives:

- 1 To examine the demographic trends of population ageing in India.
2. To know the causes of population ageing in India
- 3.To study the regional variations in Population ageing across different states in India

**Methodology:** The present study is based on a comprehensive review of existing literature on the topic, academic journals, books, online sources, various websites and Google Scholar

### Characteristics of an Ageing Population

- 1 Increased proportion of older individuals (65+ years)
- 2 Decreased proportion of younger individuals
- 3 Rising Median age
- 4 Changing population pyramid (more inverted with a larger base of older individuals)

### Causes for Population Ageing

#### DECLINING FERTILITY RATE:

In India the total fertility rate (TFR) has been steadily falling from about 5.9 children per woman in 1950s to around 2.1 children per woman in recent years. A TFR of 2.1 i.e. two children per woman is considered as the replacement rate. Rate above two children per woman indicates population growing in size and whose median age is declining. Rates below two children per woman indicates population decreasing in size and growing older. India has reached the replacement rate of 2.1 indicating a stable population. Fertility have fallen below the replacement level in 17 of the 29 states and territories. The declining fertility rate is a significant demographic trend in many countries, including India.

**Table No 1 : India- Historical Fertility Rate Data**

Year	Fertility Rate
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<b>1950</b>	<b>5.9</b>
<b>1960</b>	<b>5.8</b>
<b>1970</b>	<b>5.5</b>
<b>1980</b>	<b>4.8</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>2.2</b>
<b>2024</b>	<b>2.1</b>

The above table reveals that declining fertility rate in India . It was 5.9 in 1950 and declined to 2.1 in 2024 .

### **Causes of Declining Fertility Rate**

**1 Urbanization:** As people move to cities , their life style and family planning preferences change. People prefer smaller families due to high cost of living in urban areas. Now a days rural areas are also experiencing a fall in fertility rates.

**2 Education:** Higher education , especially among women leads to delayed marriage and childbearing. Women are prioritizing careers ,education and prefer single child.

**3 Government Policies:** The fertility rate has been declining due to the government's family planning programmes.

### **INCREASE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY:**

<sup>20</sup> India has witnessed a significant increase in life expectancy over the years. As of 2024, the average life expectancy in India is approximately 70.62 years.

This growth rate can be attributed to advancement in medical care , improved social conditions and enhanced healthcare accessibility.

**Table No 2: India: Historical Life Expectancy Data**

Year	Life Expectancy
1950	35.21
1960	41.13
1970	47.41
1980	53.47
1990	57.66
2000	62.28
2010	66.43
2020	69.73
2024	70.62

Table 2 states that in 1950 Life Expectancy was 35. 21 and which is increased to 70.62 in 2024

### **Regional Variations**

Southern Indian states Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana face one of the biggest demographic challenges in the form of an ageing population. Fertility rates in Southern India declined sharply over the past two decades. Many young professionals migrate to urban areas or abroad, leaving aged family member behind without adequate support. Some Southern state governments are encouraging bigger families through money incentives , tax reductions, childcare support and direct money provision.

**Table No 3: Decline in Share of South States in Indian Population**

Year	Share of North States	Share of South States
1951	39.1%	26.2%
1961	38.5%	25.2%
1971	37.9%	24.8%
1981	38.3%	24.2%
1991	38.8%	23.3%
2001	40.2%	21.8%
2011	41.4%	20.9%
2022*	43.2%	19.8%

Estimates

Source: census department

The table indicates that the share of North Indian states in Indian Population was 39.1% in 1951 and estimated to increase 43.2% in 2022 and the share of south Indian states was 26.2% in 1951 and estimated to decrease 19.8% in 2022.

### Implications of Population Ageing :

Population ageing has far reaching implications for societies worldwide. As the proportion of older adults increases , governments face significant challenges.

**Increased Healthcare costs:** older adults require more medical care, leading to rising healthcare expenditures.

**Pension and social security pressures:** Government face challenges in funding pension and social security systems.

**Shortage of labour force :** A shrinking working age population can lead to scarcity of labour in key sectors.

**Economic Growth:** Smaller younger population leads to reduced consumer demand affecting sectors like housing, education and consumer goods.

**Inadequate healthcare infrastructure:** India's healthcare infrastructure is n inadequate to meet the needs of the ageing population particularly in rural areas,

**Changes in Family dynamics:** Older individuals may experience changes in family structures such as living alone or with relatives.

## Findings of the Study

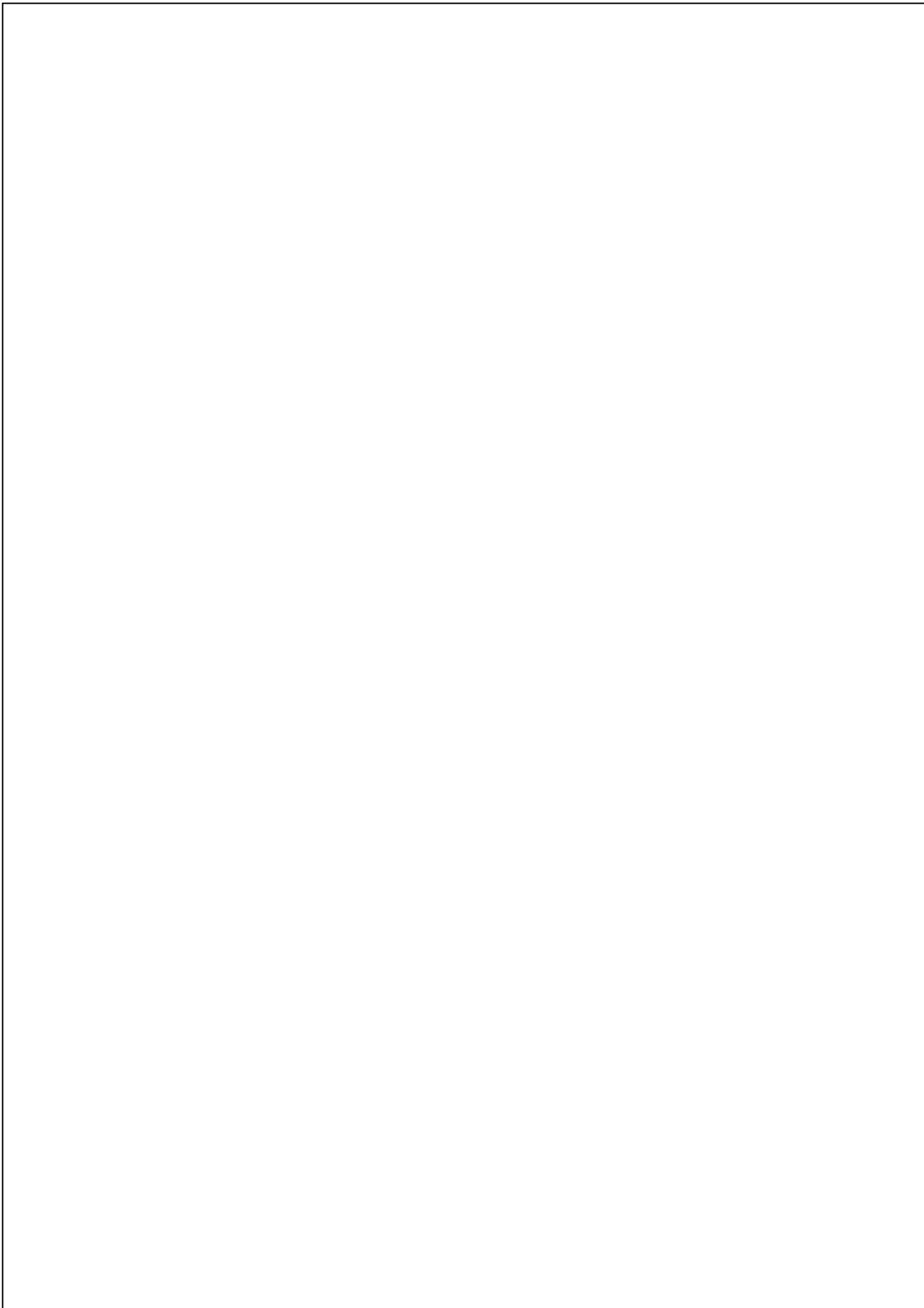
- 1 Presently India is quite young country.
- 2 Among South Asian countries pace of ageing in India is moderate.
- 3 South Indian states are ageing faster than north Indian states.
- 4 Number of elderly women are more than number of elderly men.
- 5 Japan is the country with the oldest population in the world.
- 6 About 90 percent of the workforce in the country is in the informal sector.
- 7 The population aged 85 and above is growing rapidly.
- 8 Japan and South Korea are the world's fastest ageing countries.

## Conclusion:

The elderly population is growing faster than the general population across the world and India is no exception. India's ageing population requires a multifaceted policy response. The government should prioritize investments in healthcare, social security and age friendly infrastructure. With effective planning and implementation, India can turn the challenge of an ageing population into an opportunity for growth, innovation and social cohesion. By adopting a proactive and inclusive approach, we can ensure that ageing population is a source of strength, not weakness. As we move forward, it is crucial to recognise the contributions of older Indians and to create a supportive environment that enables them to age with dignity and purpose.

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