



Independence in old age

Aging can often reduce an individual's independence. In changed socio-economic circumstances, older persons cannot possibly expect more from their family members as well as from the society in India. For leading a comfortable and respectful life in today's changing environment older persons have to be prompted to become self-reliant in every field of their life – socially, medically, financially as well as emotionally.

With medical advancement, increased healthcare awareness and economic progress in India, many older persons, particularly young older persons (age group of 60-70 years) are living longer and enjoying independence in old age.

Study Findings from Agewell Foundation Study on Independence in Old Age (2018)

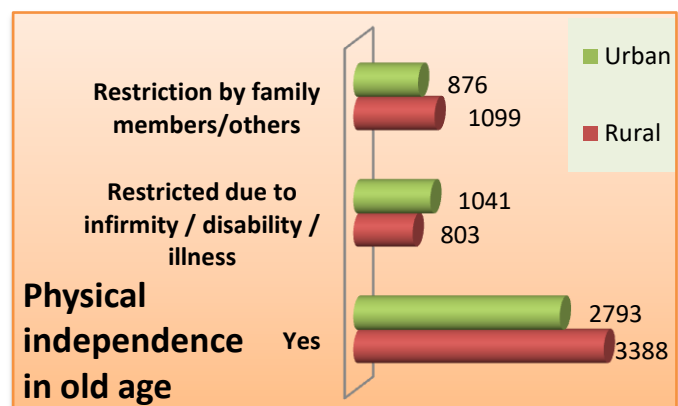
- Approx. every second elderly (51%) claimed that he/she is independent in old age. Among elderly respondents, who depend on spouse/family members/others, 59.6% respondents were from urban areas, whereas in rural areas 39.3% respondents admitted that they have to depend on others for their needs and requirements.

Kinds of independence in old age

- 61.81% elderly respondents were reportedly enjoying **physical independence** in old age.
- More than 2/3rd elderly (69.5% elderly respondents) claimed that they enjoy **social independence** in old age.
- According to 63.2% respondents, there is no **financial independence** in their life, as they have to depend on other for their financial needs and requirements.
- As per 60.5% elderly respondents, they were **psychologically independent** in old age.
- 68.2% admitted that they enjoy **ideological independence** in old age.

Physical independence in old age

- Physical independence among rural elderly is higher in comparison to physical independence among urban elderly, where 64% elderly reported that they are physically independent while in urban areas 59.3% elderly said that they are not independent physically in old age.



- Almost 1/5th elderly respondents (18.44%) claimed that they can't enjoy physical independence due to restricted mobility because of infirmity/disability/illness, etc. In urban areas 22.1% elderly respondents said that their physical activities are restricted due to infirmity/disability/illness, etc. In rural areas only 16.2% respondents (60+) complained that their physical independence is restricted due to old age related problems.

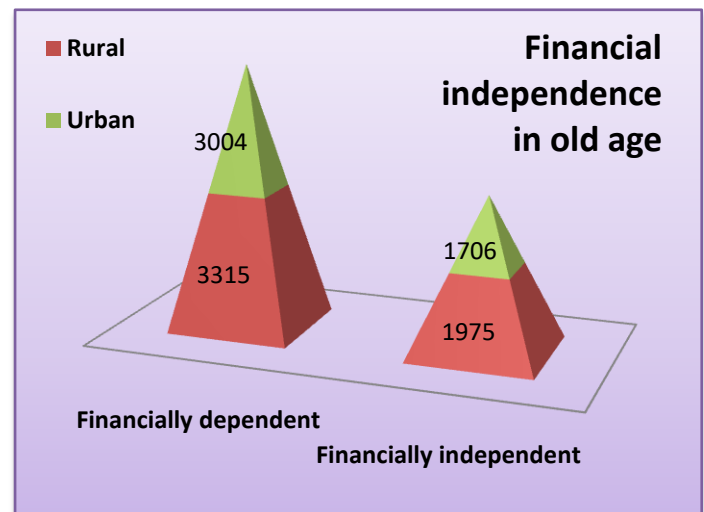
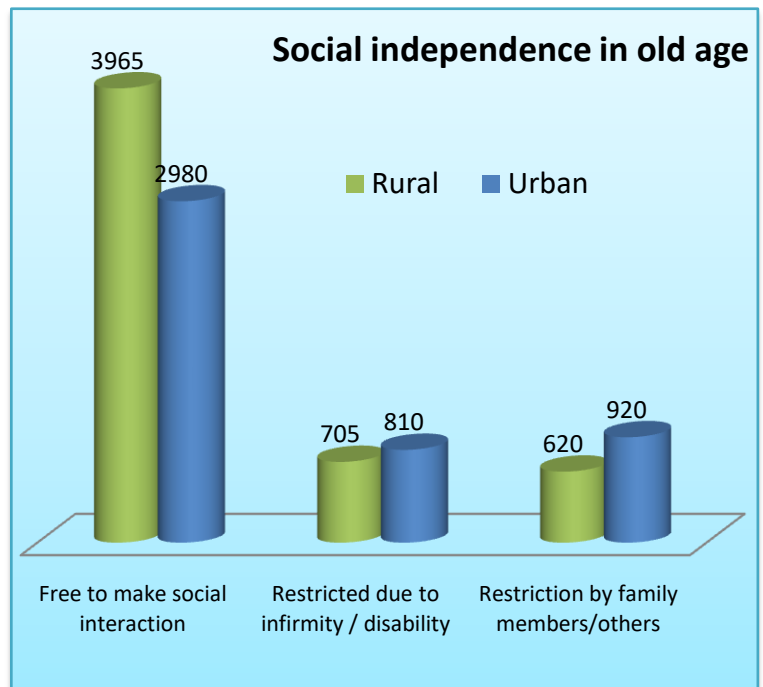


- Every fifth respondent (19.75% elderly respondents) claimed that restrictions on their physical activities are imposed by their family members.

20.8% rural and 18.6% urban elderly complained about such restrictions during the survey.

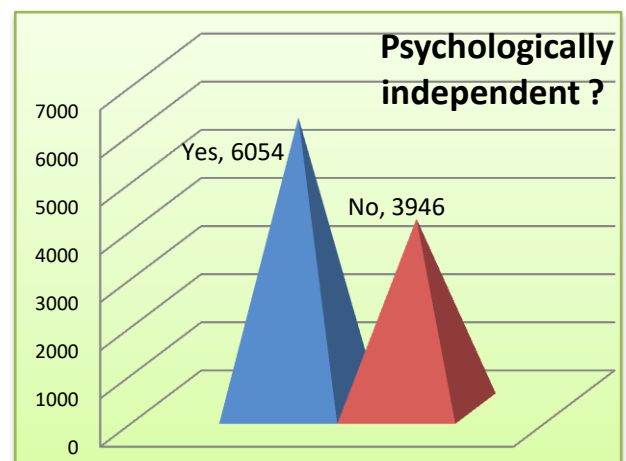
Social independence in old age

- In rural areas 75% elderly respondents claimed that they are free to make social interactions and enjoy social independence in old age, while in urban areas percentage of such elderly was 63.3%.
- When about frequency of their social interactions, more than a half (54.1%) of the elderly respondents said that their social interactions are more often, while 41.9% claimed that they often interact with people in their society.
- Overall 15% elderly (13% in rural areas and 17% in urban areas) claimed that there are restrictions on their social interaction due to infirmity/disability/old age related diseases.



Financial independence in old age

- Overall 36.8 % elderly respondents (37.3% in rural areas and 36.2% in urban areas) claimed that they are financially independent in old age.
- When these financially independent elderly were asked whether they support their family/children, 90.5% elderly agreed to support their respective families and children.



- Among financially dependent older persons, 92.6% older persons were found dependent on their family members.

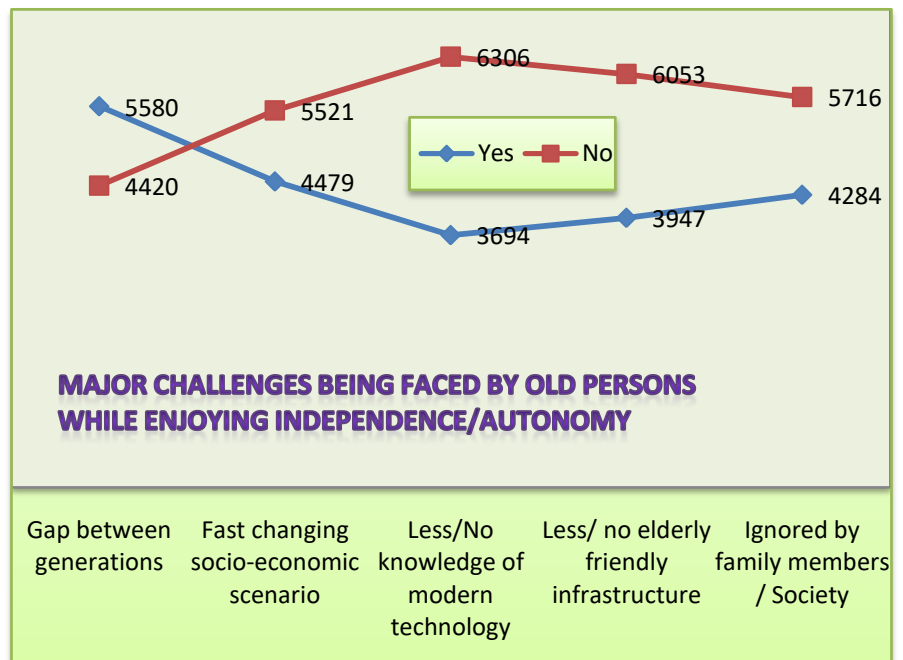


Psychological independence in old age

- While majority of older persons (60.54%) claimed that as far as their psychological life is concerned, they felt themselves psychologically independent and they have no major psychological issues in their old age life.
- 82.1% elderly termed their loneliness and isolation in old age responsible for this, 14.8% elderly said that they are psychologically dependent due to their chronic diseases/illness etc. and 3.1% elderly said that due to lack of family support system in old age they have psychological issues.

Major challenges being faced by older persons while enjoying independence/autonomy

- According to 55.8% older persons, gap between generations is a major challenge, which restricts older persons from enjoying fuller independence and/ autonomy.
- Approx. 44.8% older persons termed fast changing socio-economic and demographic scenario as the most challenging factor which is affecting independence and autonomy of older persons.
- Approx. 37% elderly respondents said that less or no knowledge of modern technology is one of the biggest challenges that older persons face while enjoying independence/autonomy.
- About 40% elderly respondents reportedly claimed that limited and / or no elderly friendly infrastructure in their localities / areas is among the major challenges being faced by elderly community in our country.
- Almost 43% older persons accepted that they are being ignored by their own family members/societies.



Conclusion

Respecting and protecting the right to autonomy and independence of older persons is the social responsibility of all. Apart from various initiatives undertaken at government level, other stakeholders i.e. non-government agencies, individuals, and the society are equally liable to ensure autonomy and independence of older persons at every stage.