



(In Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC at United Nations since 2011)
(In association with UN-DPI-NGO)

SOLO AGEING

With Special Focus On
STATUS OF OLDER PEOPLE LIVING ALONE IN INDIA
A Study by Agewell Foundation

September 2024

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AGEWELL RESEARCH & ADVOCACY CENTRE

(For Needs & Rights of Older people)

A

Study Report on

SOLO AGEING

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STATUS OF OLDER PEOPLE LIVING ALONE IN INDIA

September 2024

By

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INTRODUCTION

Solo aging, the phenomenon of living alone in Old Age, has become a rapidly growing trend today. In India, the percentage of elderly living alone has been rising, with approximately 10-12% of the elderly population living alone, according to various studies and census data. This trend is more pronounced in rural areas due to the increased migration of younger family members to cities or abroad for better opportunities. Older women are more likely to live alone compared to men, largely because women tend to outlive their spouses. The average life expectancy for women in India is about 73 years, while for men it is around 70 years. Consequently, many older women face longer periods of widowhood.

Many older persons are compelled to live alone in old age due to factors such as the migration of children, the rise of nuclear families, increasing life expectancy, the death of spouses, growing rates of divorce, poor financial conditions of children, and interpersonal issues within the family. On the other hand, driven by the fast-changing socio-economic and demographic landscape, many seniors actively choose to live alone. They prefer to enjoy their old age without external interference, valuing their independence and autonomy. The desire for personal space and control over one's environment is a strong motivating factor in opting for solo aging. Over the years, it has been observed that seniors often appreciate the peace that comes with living alone, finding it conducive to their hobbies and daily routines.



With increasing life expectancy, more people find themselves aging alone. Solo agers face unique challenges, such as maintaining independence, managing healthcare, and combating loneliness without the immediate support of family. The rise in solo aging can be attributed to societal changes, such as the decline in marriage rates, higher divorce rates, and increased geographic mobility. Additionally, the modern emphasis on individualism and personal fulfillment has led many to prioritize career and personal growth over traditional family

structures. As a result, many find themselves navigating the complexities of aging without the traditional safety net of family support.

The ground realities of loneliness in old age are stark and multifaceted. Many older persons experience loneliness due to physical isolation, loss of loved ones, and diminished social networks. This isolation can lead to a decline in mental and physical health, manifesting as depression, anxiety, and increased susceptibility to chronic illnesses. The stigma around loneliness often prevents older persons from seeking help, exacerbating their isolation. Additionally, financial constraints can limit access to social activities and healthcare, further deepening the sense of loneliness. In rural areas, the lack of transportation and community resources make it even harder for older persons to stay connected. Urban settings, despite having more services, still leave older persons feeling isolated amidst a bustling population.

Loneliness in old age is a pressing issue that requires comprehensive solutions, including community support, accessible mental health services, and opportunities for meaningful social engagement. In old age most older persons have to deal with physical, social and emotional loneliness.

Physical Loneliness: This type of loneliness arises from the absence of physical companionship. Many older persons live alone, and the lack of daily human interaction can lead to feelings of isolation. This is particularly challenging for those with mobility issues, as they may find it difficult to leave their homes and engage with the outside world.

Social Loneliness: Social loneliness occurs when older persons feel disconnected from their community and social networks. This can happen due to retirement, which often reduces regular social interactions, or because friends and family members have passed away or moved. Social loneliness can lead to a sense of being forgotten or unimportant.

Emotional Loneliness: Emotional loneliness is the feeling of not having a close, intimate relationship. Older persons who have lost a spouse or who have strained relationships with family members may experience this form of loneliness. It is the longing for a deep emotional connection, someone to share personal thoughts and feelings with, which, when unmet, usually lead to sadness and depression.



OVERVIEW

In old age, despite being surrounded by family members, most elderly feel a profound sense of isolation. This can stem from generational gap, different interests, or lack of meaningful communication. Often, younger family members are preoccupied with their own lives, careers, and digital engagements, leaving little time for genuine interactions with their elderly relative/even parents. This lack of attention does lead to feelings of neglect and unimportance.

Older persons struggle with feeling of becoming a burden, especially if they require physical or financial assistance, which exacerbate their sense of loneliness. Emotional support within the family is limited, as not all family members are equipped to provide the understanding and empathy needed. This within the family loneliness is more challenging to address than external social loneliness because it involves navigating complex family dynamics and overcoming emotional barriers. For elderly individuals, this type of loneliness is deeply distressing, as it undermines the primary source of social and emotional support they rely on in their later years.

Limited social interaction significantly impacts the well-being of older persons. Without regular engagement with friends or community members, most elderly feel disconnected from the world around them. This isolation invariably leads to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. Furthermore, the lack of social interaction reduces opportunities for



physical activity, which is crucial for maintaining mobility and overall health. Limited social contact also means fewer chances for mental stimulation, such as conversations and or activities that challenge the mind, potentially accelerating cognitive decline. Older persons without social interactions miss out on the joy and comfort that companionship brings, which can severely affect their quality of life.

In old age, the state of one's mind is paramount. Maintaining mental clarity, emotional stability, and a positive outlook can significantly influence overall well-being. Cognitive health impacts daily functioning, decision-making, and independence. Engaging in activities that stimulate the brain, such as conversations, reading, puzzles, or learning new skills, does help preserve cognitive function, delay the onset of dementia and other age-related cognitive declines. Emotional well-being is equally important; a positive mindset can enhance physical health, reduce stress, and improve resilience in the face of challenges. Social connections and meaningful relationships provide emotional support and a sense of belonging, which are crucial for mental health. Moreover, having a sense of purpose and staying involved in the community or hobbies can provide structure and motivation, contributing to overall life satisfaction.

Solo aging has its pros and cons as well. On the positive side, it allows individuals to maintain independence, make personal choices, and live life on their terms without familial obligations. It can lead to self-discovery and a strong sense of autonomy. However, the downsides include increased risks of loneliness, lack of immediate support in emergencies, and potential difficulties in managing health and daily tasks. Without a support system, solo agers may face challenges in accessing necessary resources and dealing with the emotional aspects of aging. Overall, the quality of solo aging depends on one's ability to create financial independence, build & maintain a supportive network, manage their health and well-being independently.



AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the research initiative is to assess the status of older people living alone in India, changing socio-economic conditions, ground realities of living conditions of older persons, and challenges being faced by older people living alone through an in-depth qualitative and comprehensive study.

Under the study, special emphasis was given to the concept of solo ageing, which has gained momentum over the years across the globe and India is not an exception to this.

To further explore and understand realism, the following is a set of specific objectives that have been framed to research the fast-changing socio-economic and demographic situations that emerged over the years:

- To assess the current family set-ups, older people living in
- To assess the family support system available for older persons
- To assess the factors influencing solo ageing
- To assess the physical and psychological status of older persons living alone
- To enlist the advantages and disadvantages of solo ageing
- To underline the changing attitude of younger generations towards their elderly family members
- To enlist opinions and views on older people's choice of solo ageing
- To organize suggestions and recommendations for concerned authorities, stakeholders and particularly the family members



METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Area & units of the study

The entire country constituted the area of this study. Rural and urban areas were selected for this study. All old people (60+) were taken as the target group of the study. Out of about 148-150 million elderly persons, a list of 10000 older persons who were willing to be part of the study was prepared.

Elderly respondents were divided into 4 categories based on gender and rural-urban divide of the respondents.

For the study, the entire country was divided into 5 primary geographical zones – South, West, North, East and Central. Under the study 360 districts. Spread across 25 states/Union Territories of India were covered.

As the literature review suggests older people, face diverse issues, problems, and challenges ranging from frailty to functional inadequacies; physical & health problems; age and gender discrimination, disability, social isolation & loneliness; neglect, economic insecurity, etc. Therefore, while developing this list of respondents or the sampling frame the representation of this diversity was kept in mind so that a vast variety of challenges are culled out from this research.



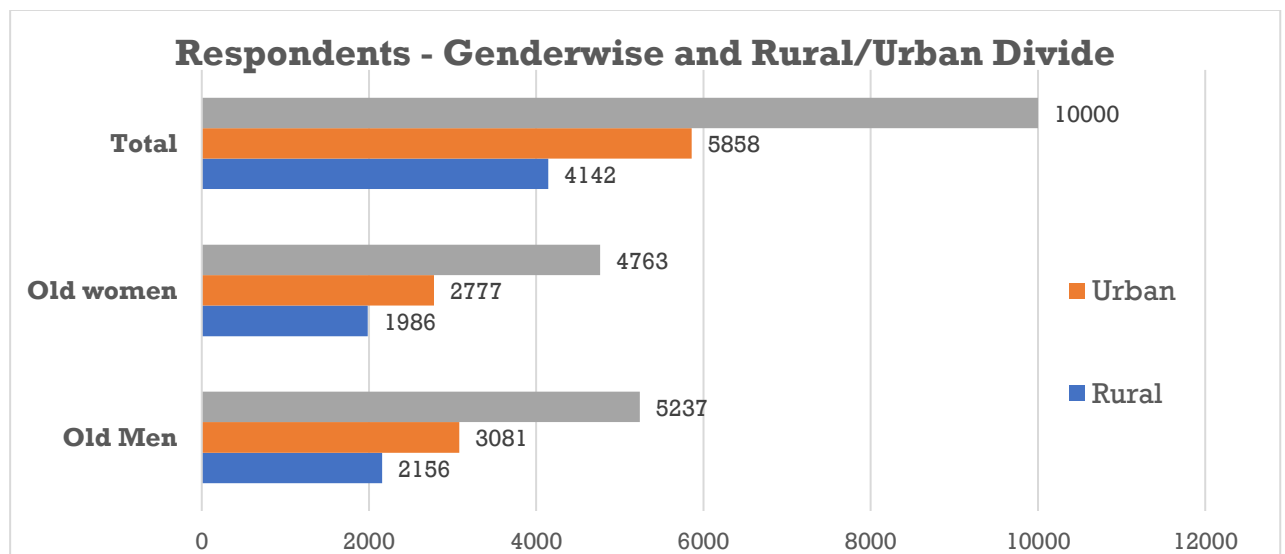
Scope & methodology of the study

This study is an attempt to understand the current status of older people, particularly those who are living alone. In addition, the study is also designed to review current socio-economic, demographic, and gender dynamics, highlighting the patterns that emerge with the contemporary economic, social, and healthcare issues and challenges faced by older persons. It has been endeavored to explore the relationship between the needs & rights of older persons and ever-growing challenges that Older People face.

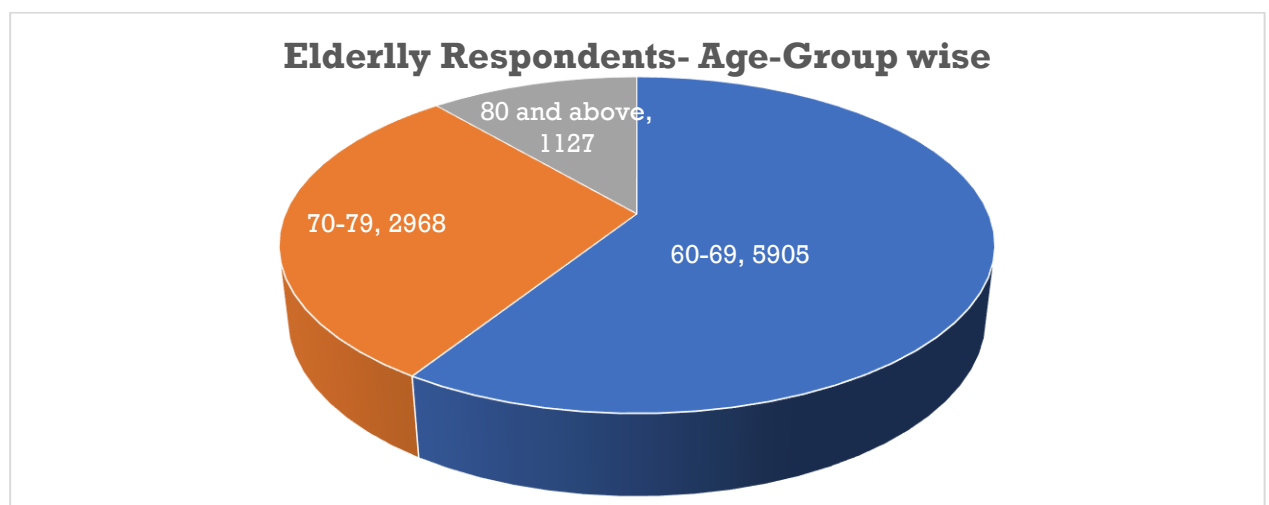
Sampling, sample size & duration

The respondents who comprised the sample for the study were selected based on random sampling based on gender, community (rural-urban), age group, income group, health status, etc.

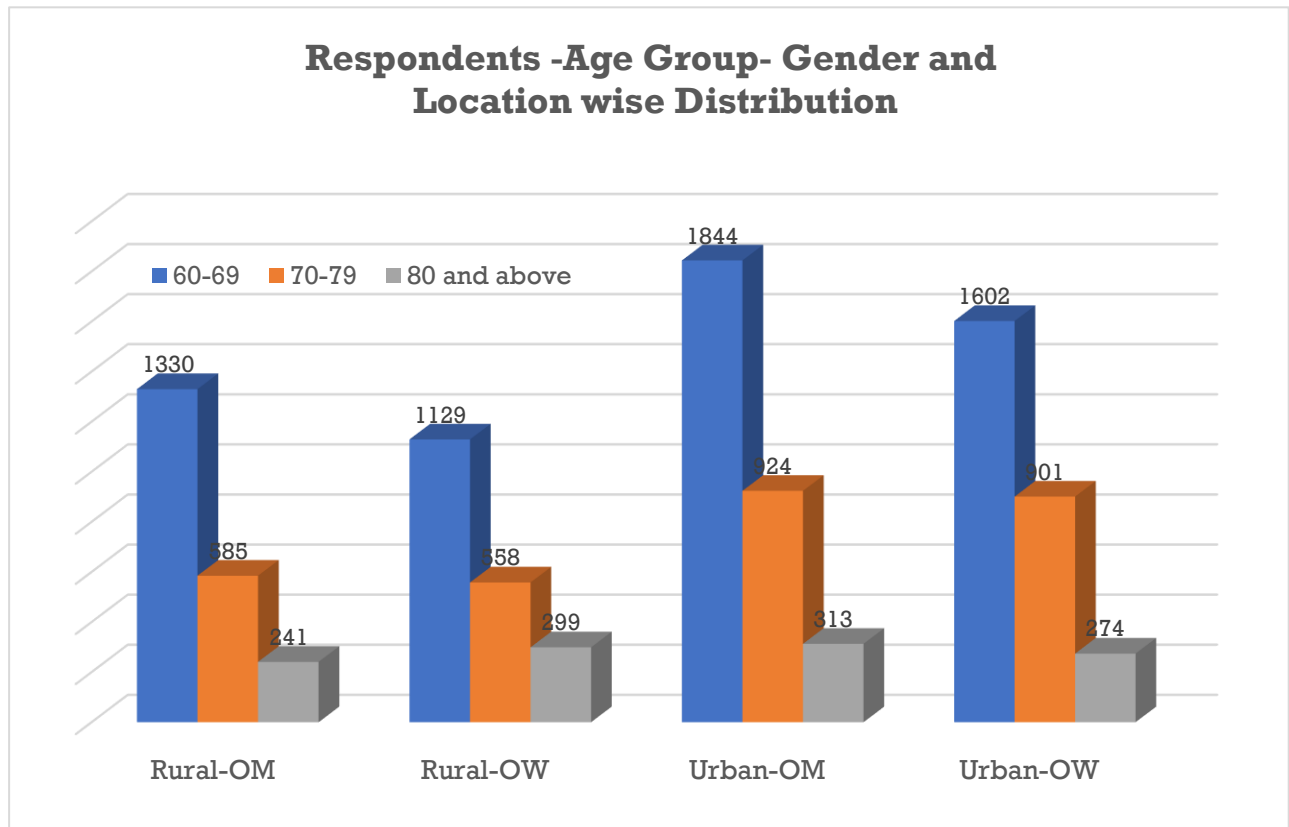
- A total of 10000 respondents were studied by 480 volunteers across 25 states/union territories of India. The survey was conducted in September 2024.



- Among the respondents, 4142 were approached from rural and 5858 were from urban areas. As far as the gender-wise composition of the sample is concerned, out of 10000 total respondents, 5237 respondents were older men and 4763 were older women.



- The number of older men respondents from urban areas (3081) was comparatively higher as depicted in the diagram. The number of older women (2777) was comparatively lower than other groups of respondents.
- Age-wise, the number of younger older persons i.e., respondents in the age groups of 60-69 years were higher (59.1%) in comparison to other age groups i.e. 70-79 years and 80 & above (29.7% and 11.3% respectively.) Out of 10000 elderly respondents interviewed during the survey, approx. 2/5th, i.e. 5905 respondents were found to be in the age group of 60-69 years.



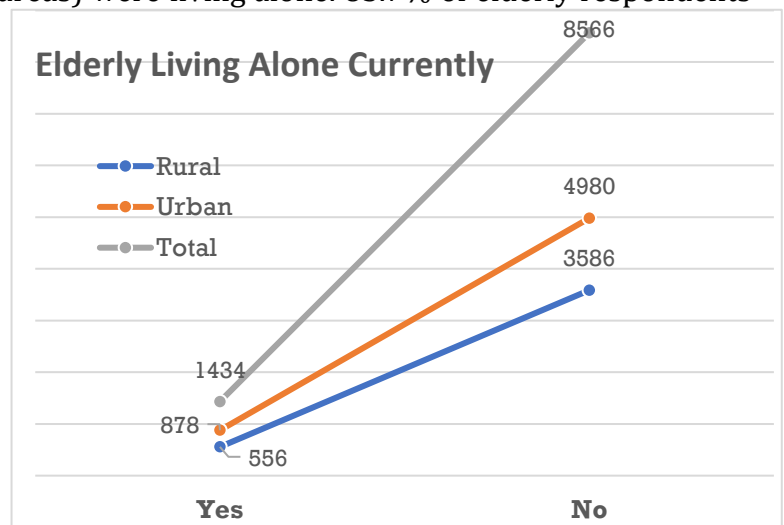
Tools and techniques for data collection

The main emphasis was on qualitative information; therefore, a more intuitive approach was adopted for the research to arrive at an understanding of the issue to cull out a pattern. The information was enriched with the help of focused group discussions and in-depth interviews.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY ON SOLO AGEING

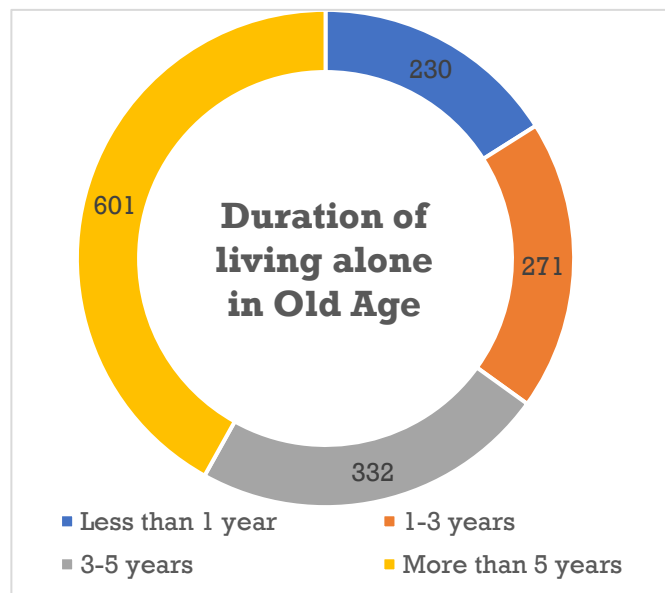
Living Alone or being isolated even among family members

- During the study, it was found that overall 14.3% of elderly respondents (13.4% in rural areas and 15% in urban areas) were living alone. 85.7% of elderly respondents claimed that they don't live alone currently.



- Among female respondents, 13.4% of respondents admitted that they live alone while among male elderly respondents, 15.4% of male respondents said that they live alone.

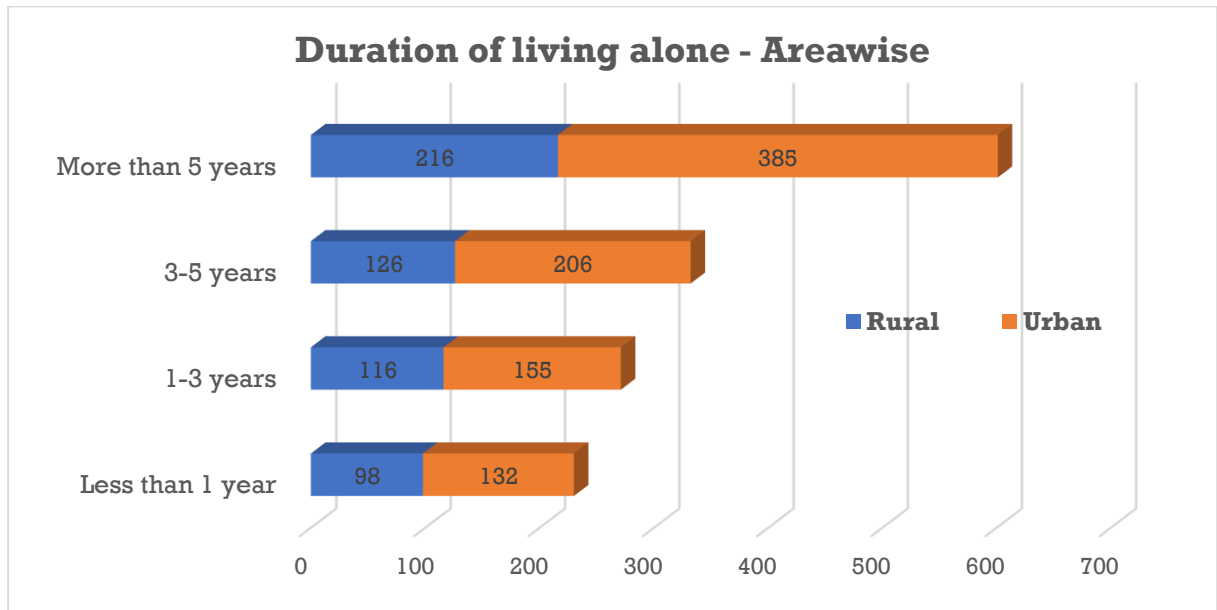
- **Among all elderly respondents, who were living alone, 41.9% reportedly said that they have been living alone for more than 5 years.** 23.2% of respondents admitted that they have been living alone for 3-5 years.



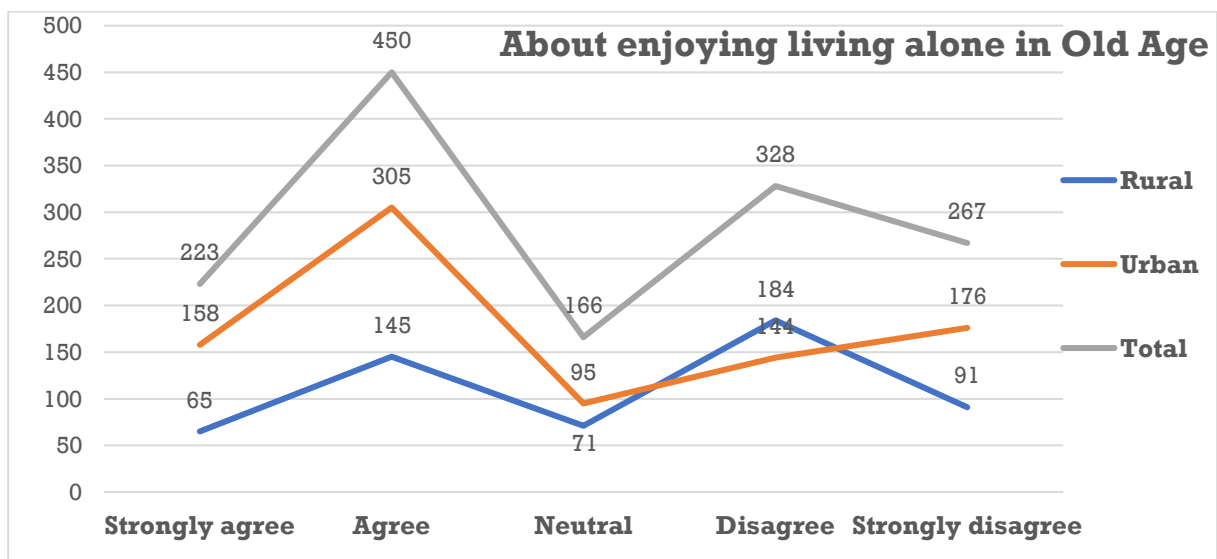
- As per the 18.9% of elderly respondents, who are living alone, they have been alone and on their own for 1-3 years. While 16% of elderly respondents, now living alone, say that they are alone for less than a year only.

- In urban areas, 43.8 % of elderly respondents (living alone) said that they have been living alone for more than 5 years, whereas the percentage of elderly in rural areas was quite lower (38.8%).

- **Gender-wise, 46.5% of elderly women among all elderly women living alone reportedly claimed that they have been living alone for more than 5 years.** In the male category, only 37.1% of respondents claimed that they have been alone for more than 5 years.



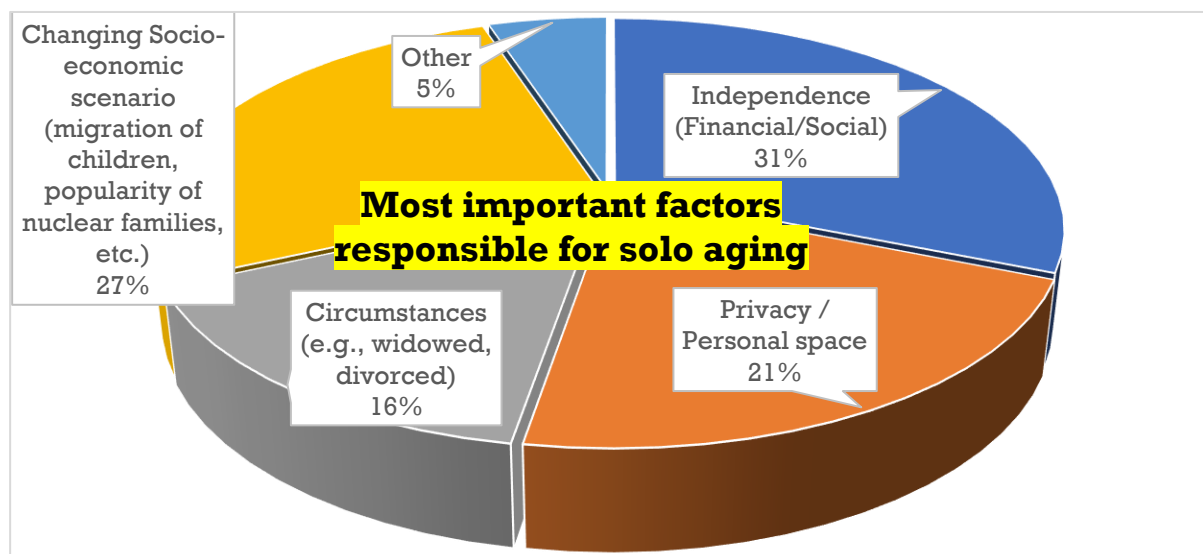
- When selected elderly respondents were asked if they are happy living alone **in old age, most of them (31.4%) agreed that they are enjoying their life.**
- 22.9% of older persons living alone, say they do not feel comfortable. 18.6% of elderly respondents say that they feel miserable living alone.
- **Overall, 46.9% of elderly respondents (living alone) were found happy with their life while 41.5% of elderly respondents in this category claimed that they were not happy with their life.** 11.6% of the elderly living alone said that they are neither happy nor unhappy while living alone.



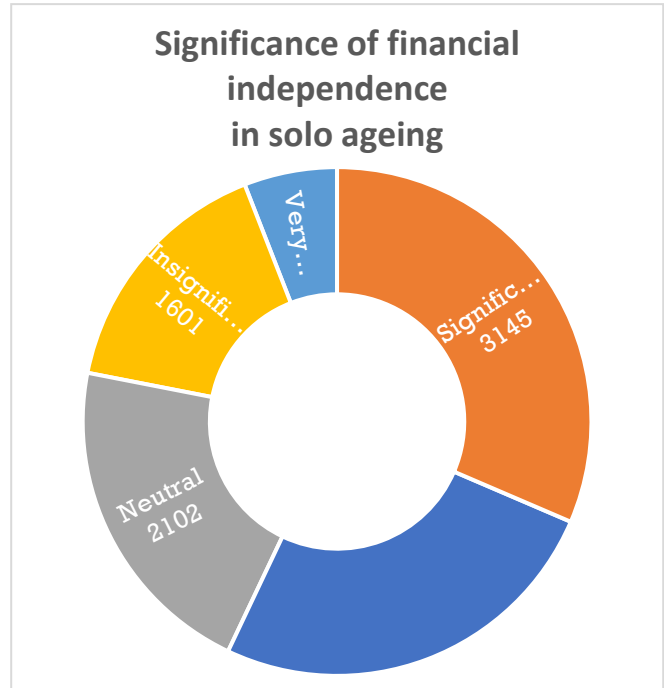
Factors Influencing Solo Aging

Solo Ageing	Living Alone	Loneliness/Isolation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a combination of living physically alone, living with spouses/family members but feeling isolated/alone • Mostly by choice • High level of independence • Popular among younger older persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically living alone due to circumstances • Mostly by compulsion • High level of dependence on others • Mostly prevalent in upper age groups (75+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of being alone / isolated while living alone or while living within family • It's a matter of mind only • Not related to Living Alone of Solo Ageing only

- When it was attempted to identify the most critical factors responsible for Solo Ageing, it was found that the desire to be independent, financially and socially is the most prominent factor. **Over 31% of elderly respondents claimed that people prefer to live alone in old age so that they can remain independent (financially/socially)**
- According to survey data, **more than 1/4th of elderly respondents (26.7%) people have to live alone due to fast-changing socio-economic scenarios i.e. migration of younger generations, the popularity of nuclear families, etc.**
- As per the **21.5% of elderly respondents, older persons go for solo aging for the sake of privacy/personal space in old age.**
- Circumstances (e.g. widowhood, divorce, etc.) also play a major role in pushing older persons into solo aging.

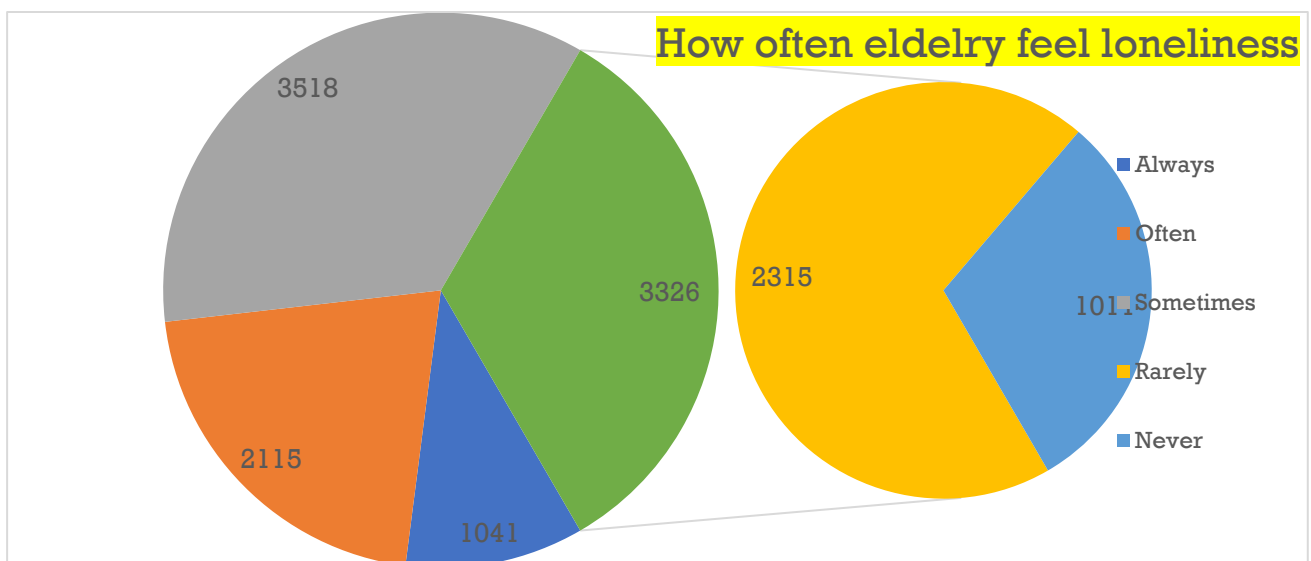


- Study data indicate that financial independence plays a vital role in older persons' decision to live alone as **almost 57% of elderly respondents claimed that financial independence is very significant/significant.**
- Most elderly respondents i.e. **31.5% accepted that the role of financial independence is significant while 25.6% of elderly respondents admitted that the role of financial independence is very significant in the decision to live alone in old age.**
- 21% of elderly respondents said that they see no role of financial independence in older persons' decision to live alone.
- 16% of elderly respondents claimed that financial independence is insignificant, so far as the decision to live alone is concerned. 5.9% claimed that it is very insignificant.



Loneliness in Solo Ageing

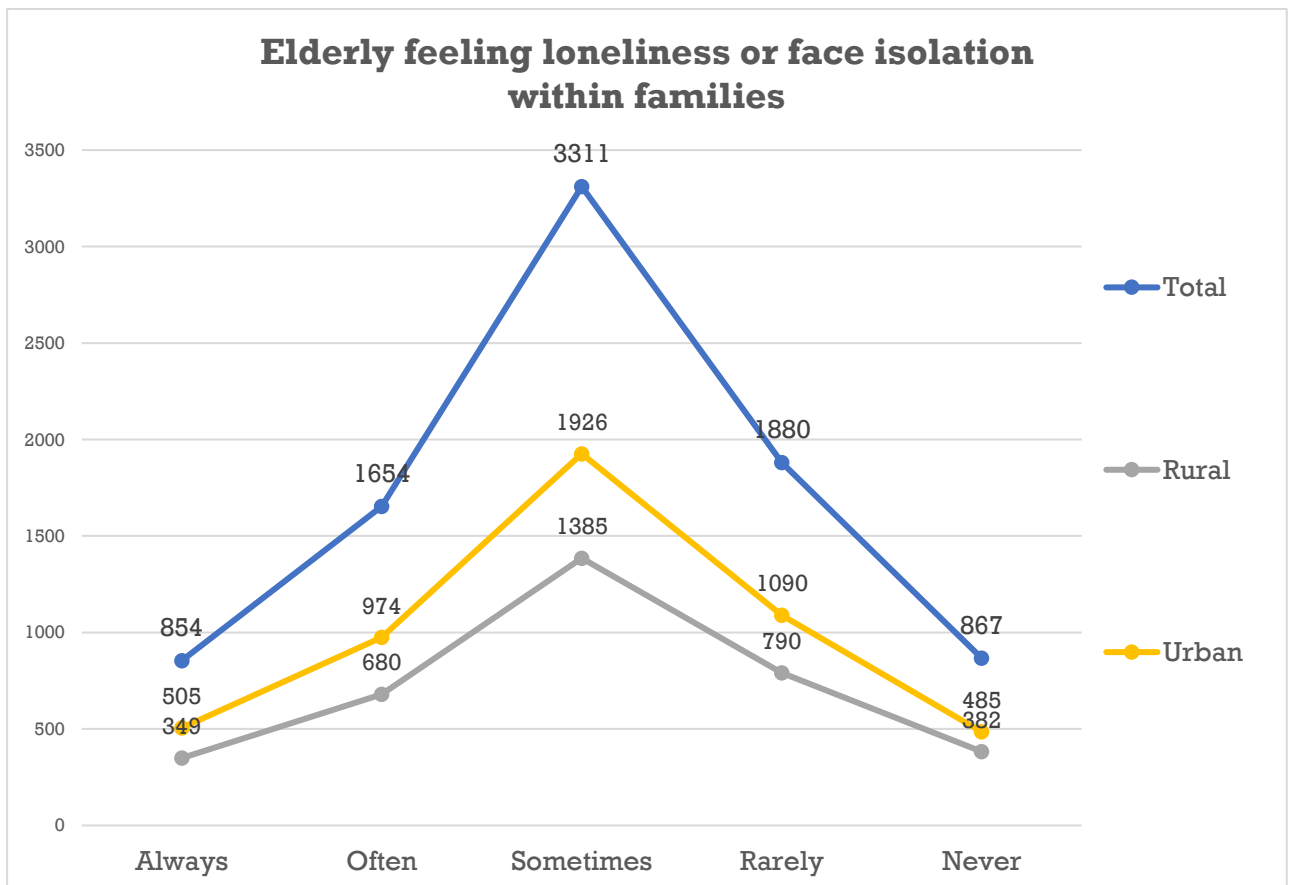
- Under the study, it was also tried to assess the status of loneliness among older persons. During the survey, 10.4% of respondents (1041 out of 10000 respondents) admitted that they always feel lonely.



- 21.2% of elderly respondents (2115 out of 10000 respondents) claimed that they often feel lonely
- Most of the elderly respondents i.e. 35.2% accepted that they feel loneliness sometimes.
- 23.2% of elderly respondents said that they rarely feel lonely and among all, 10.1% of elderly respondents reportedly claimed that they never feel lonely.

During the survey, it was also found that people also feel lonely or face isolation within families.

- As per the study data, **almost every 10th elderly, who are living with other family members, face isolation within the family almost daily.**
- Among elderly respondents, living in families, 38.7% of respondents face isolation sometimes while 19.3% of respondents feel loneliness more often.



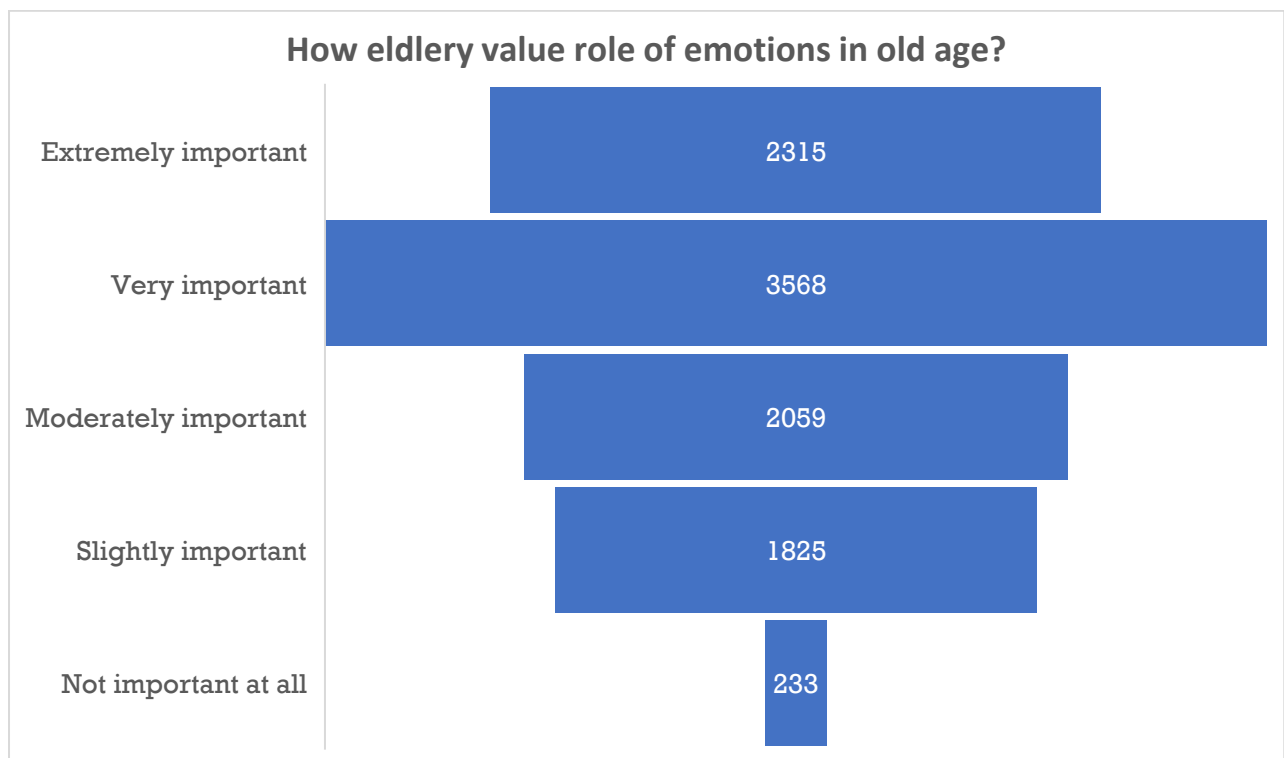
- Approx. 1/3rd of elderly respondents, living with their other family members, claimed that they rarely or never feel lonely.
- When data obtained from rural and urban elderly respondents was analyzed separately, it was found that in rural areas slightly fewer older persons (67.3%) feel loneliness within families in comparison to urban elderly respondents (68.4%).
- In urban areas, fewer elderly (31.6%) reported that they don't face isolation within their own family in comparison to rural elderly (32.7%).

Mental Health of Old People Living Alone

- During the survey, **40.8% of elderly respondents (living alone) accepted that living alone in old age has affected their mental health negatively.**
- Approximately, 31.7% of respondents claimed that living alone in old age has affected their mental health positively.
- About 27.5% of elderly respondents, who were living alone, said that their mental health is not affected due to their living pattern.

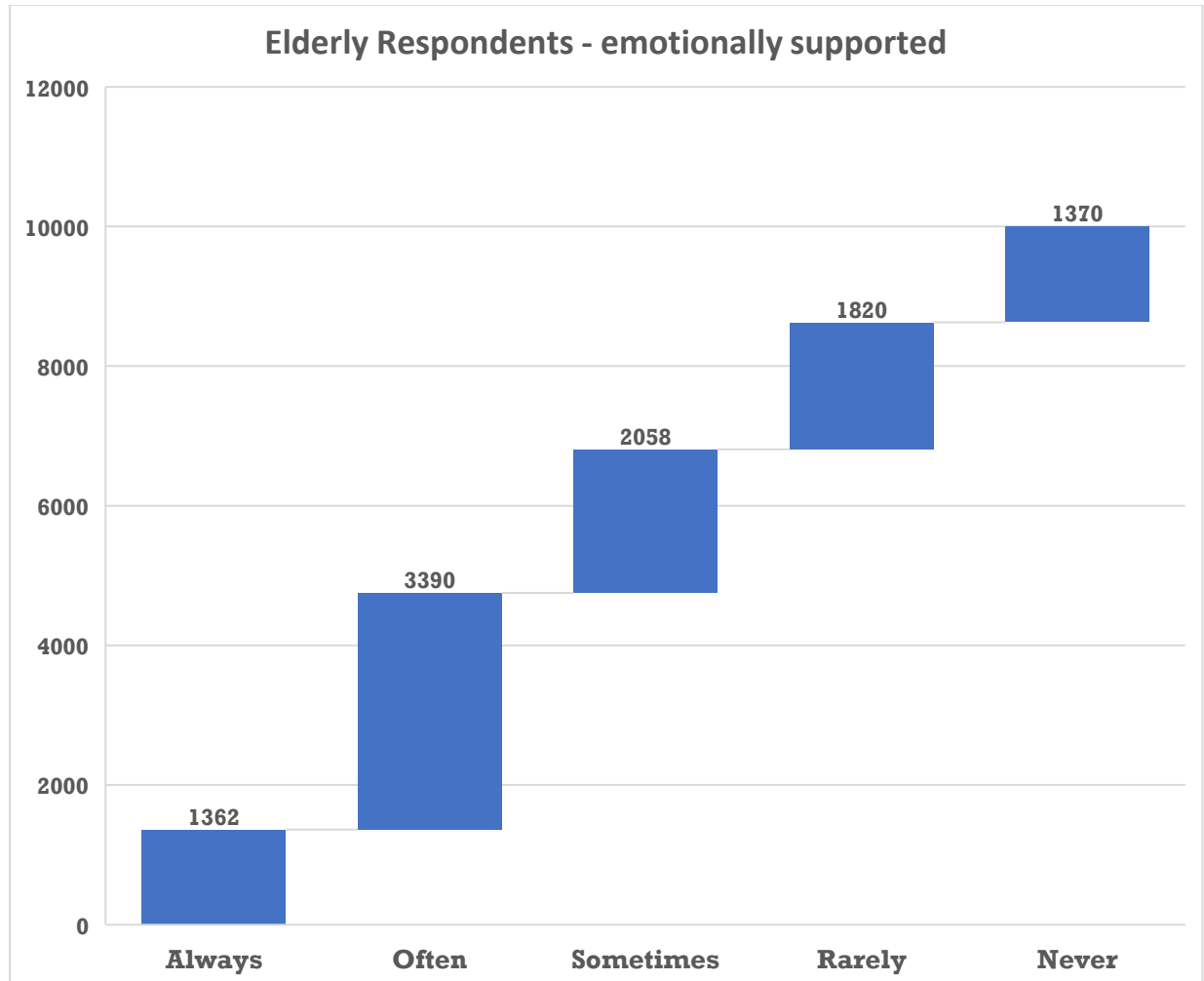
Emotional Well-being

- Study indicates that **approx. 79.4% of old people value role of emotions in old age.** As per the data compiled during the survey, 23.2% of respondents said that emotions have an extremely important place in their lives, 35.7% claimed that emotions play a very important role in old age and 20.6% of respondents stated that emotions are moderately important for them.



- Only approx. 1/5th elderly respondents said that emotions are not important at all or slightly important only in their opinion.
- When the sample of older persons was asked whether they feel emotionally supported or not, **most of them i.e. 33.9% (3568) said that they feel emotionally supported more often.**

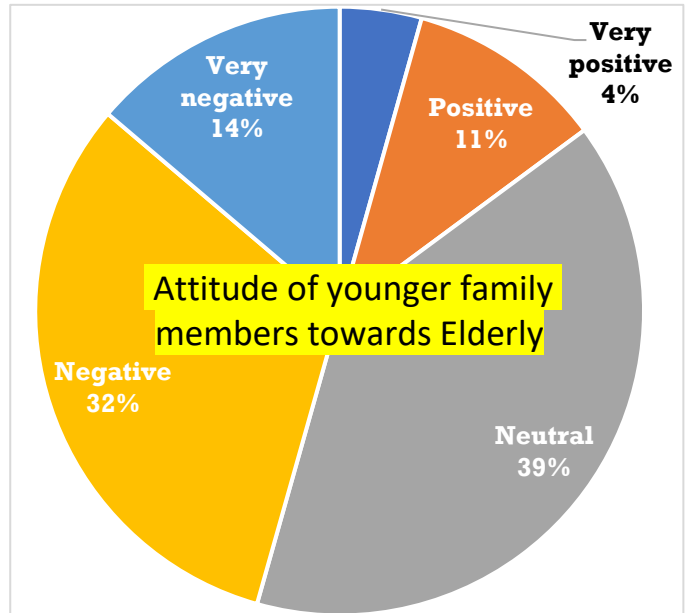
- **13.6% of elderly respondents claimed that they always feel emotionally supported as they remain in touch with their family members/relatives/friends.**
- 20.6% of elderly respondents feel themselves emotionally supported only sometimes.
- 18.2% said that they rarely feel emotionally supported and 13.7% of elderly respondents reportedly claimed that they never themselves emotionally supported.



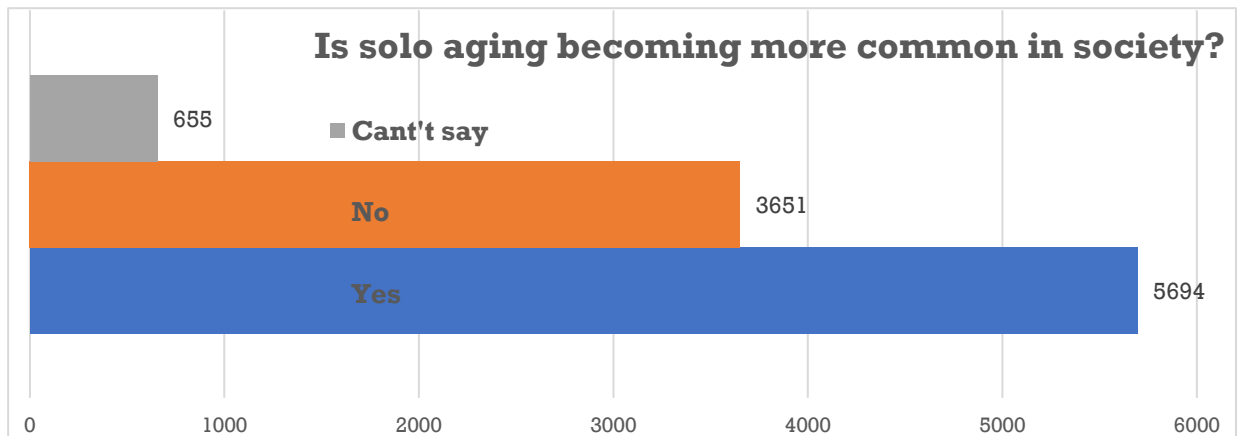
Attitudes of Younger Family Members

- During the survey, according to elderly respondents, the attitude of younger family members towards elderly family members was found discouraging as **only 28.7% of elderly respondents admitted that the attitude of younger people towards their elderly members is positive or warm and caring.**
- Overall, 10.1% of respondents said that younger members' attitude is very positive and 18.6% of elderly respondents reportedly agreed that the attitude of the younger generation is positive towards the elderly.

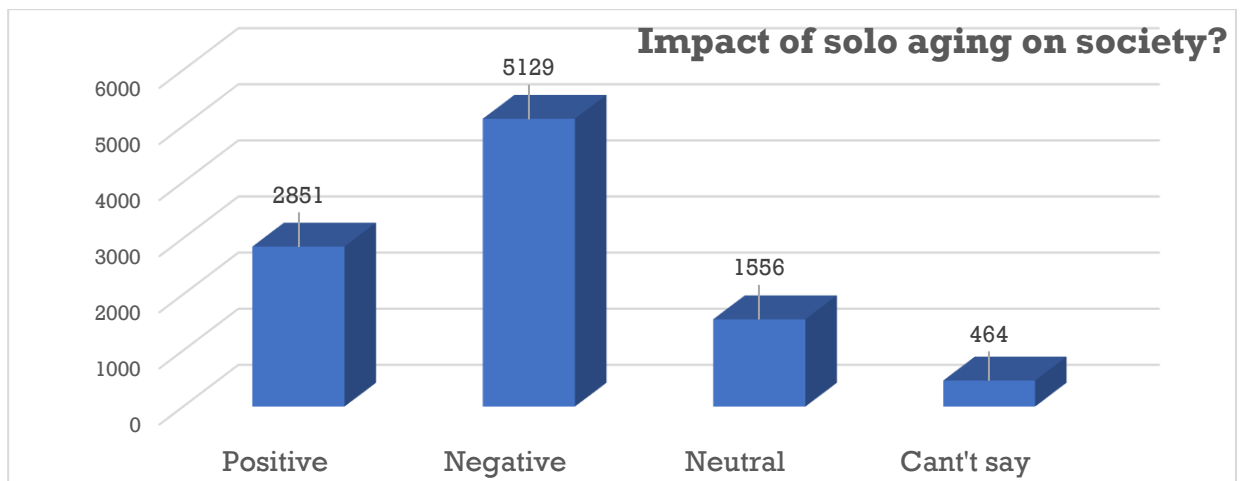
- According to 20.2% of elderly respondents attitude of younger family members towards the elderly is neither negative nor positive as most of them have no experience living with elderly family members or they don't care about them much.
- **More than a third of elderly respondents (35.6%) claimed that the attitude of younger family members towards the elderly is negative** and 15.7% of elderly respondents admitted that the younger generation's attitude towards the elderly is very negative.
- 15.5% of elderly respondents disagree with the fact that they feel respected by younger family members while 32.1% strongly disagreed with this.
- Almost 32.1% of elderly respondents expressed their inability or avoidance to answer whether they are respected by their family members or not.
- Overall 20.3% of elderly respondents said that they feel respected by their younger family members. 5.1% of respondents were strongly agree with this.



Reality of Solo Aging

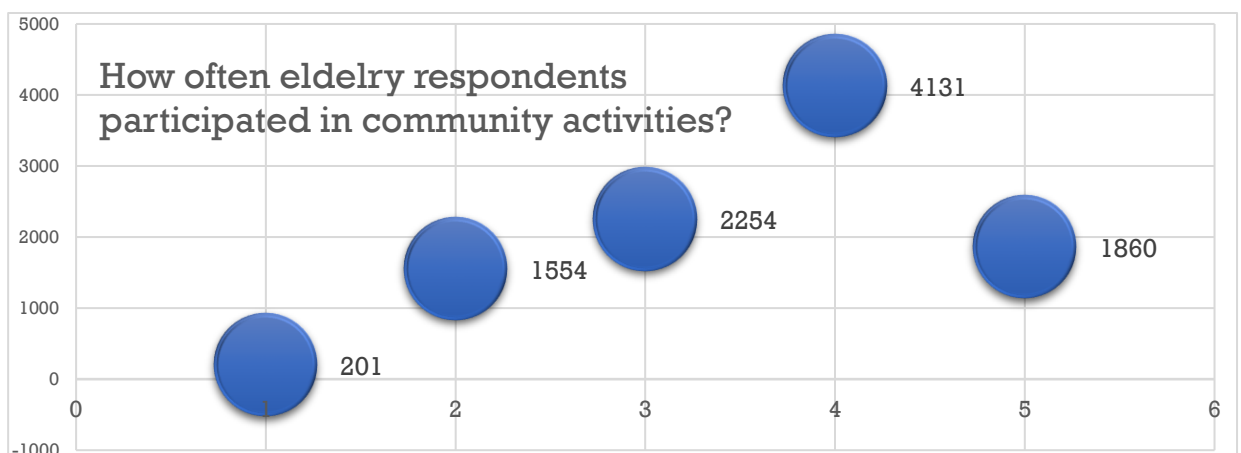


- When it was tried to understand the growing popularity of Solo Ageing in society, **more than half (57%) of elderly respondents reportedly accepted that the reality of solo aging is becoming more common in society.**
- In the opinion of 36.5% of elderly respondents, the concept of solo ageing is still new to our society.
- 6.6% of elderly respondents expressed their inability to reply to this question.

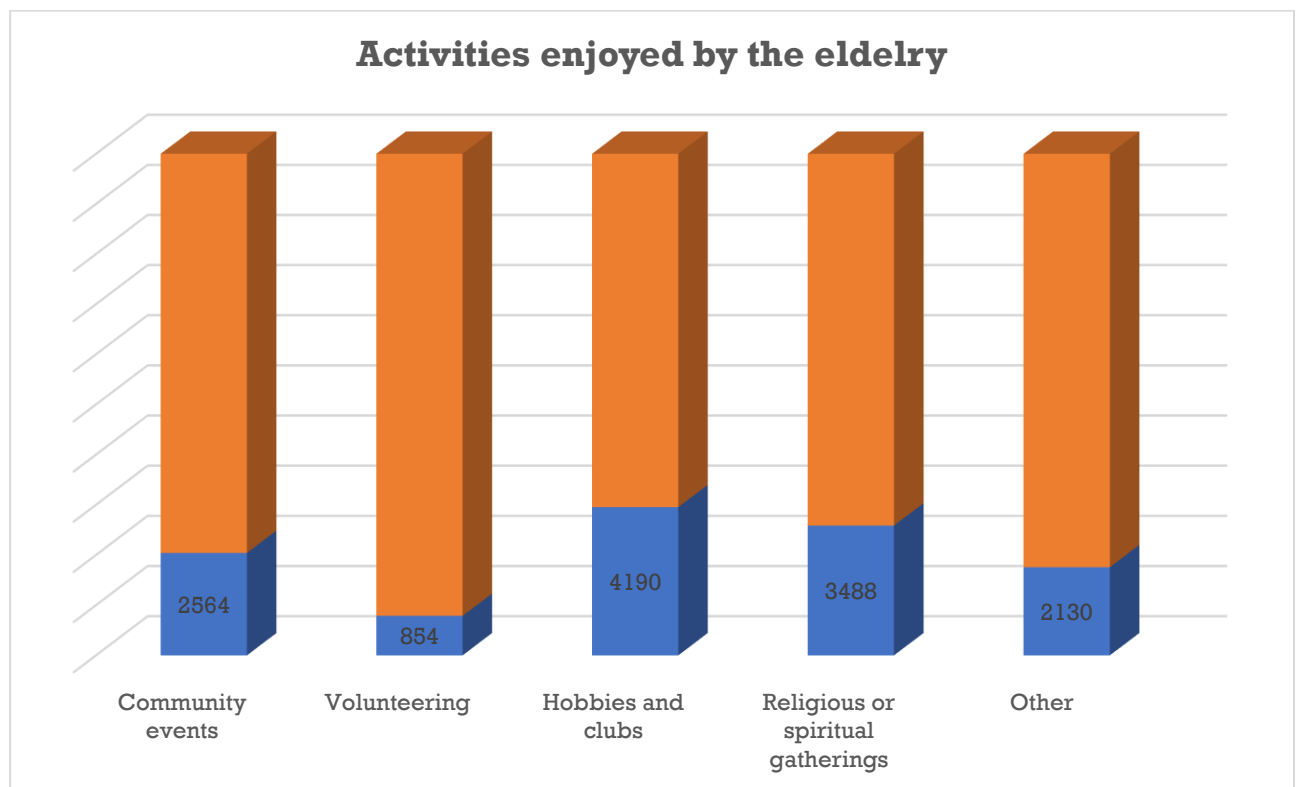


- As per the data obtained from older persons, **more than half of respondents i.e. 51.3% of elderly respondents claimed that the concept of solo ageing impacted society negatively.**
- 28.5% of elderly respondents reportedly admitted that solo ageing has a positive impact on society.
- According to 15.6% of elderly respondents solo ageing has no impact on society.
- 4.6% of respondents said that they have no idea about it.
- **According to 35.6% of respondents, older persons who live alone are affected adversely due to loneliness.**
- According to 23% of elderly respondents, solo aging has a positive impact on individuals.
- 29.6% of selected elderly said that solo ageing has both, negative and positive effects on the lives of older persons living alone.
- 11.7% of respondents expressed that in their opinion, the situation of living alone arises circumstantially and it has no particular effect on older persons.

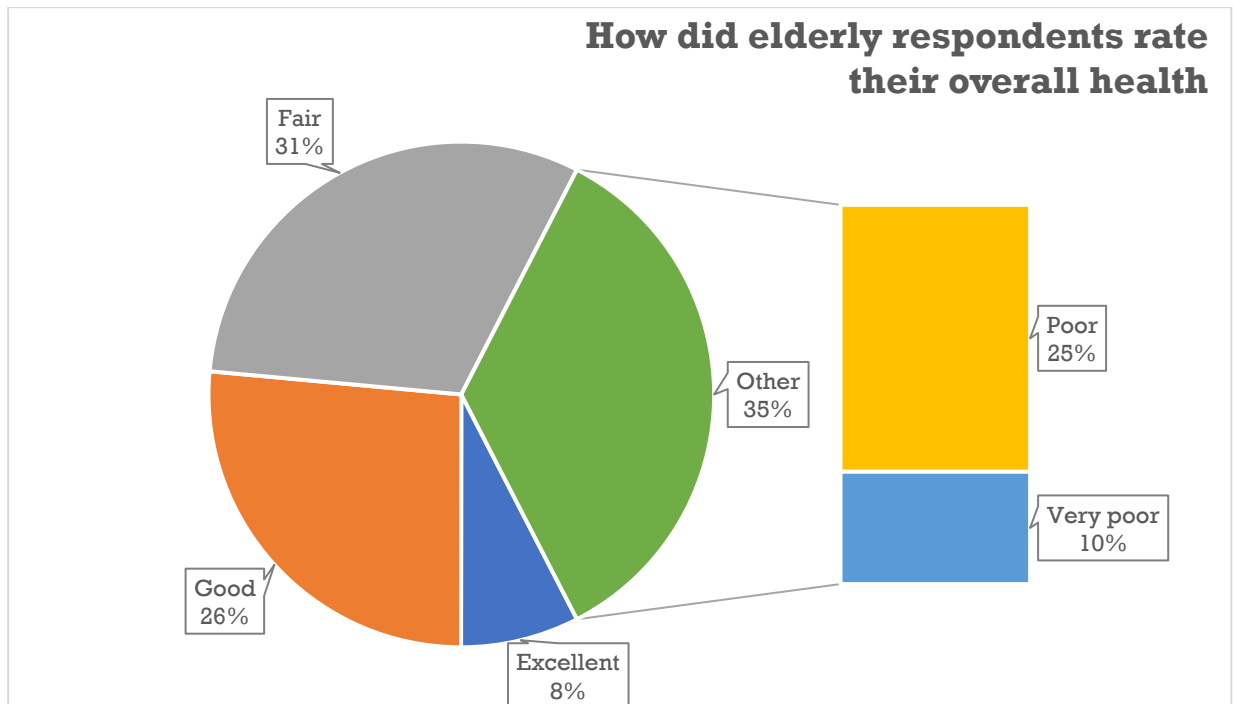
Engagement in social activities



- When older persons were asked about their engagement in social activities, it was found that **most of them i.e. 41.3% admitted that they rarely participate in community activities.**
- 22.5% of respondents said that they prefer to participate in community activities once a month or when there is an urgent need.
- Among all only 2% of older persons accepted that they remain engaged in community activities daily.
- 15.5% claimed that participate in social/community activities on an average weekly basis.
- 18.6% of respondents said that they never participated in community activities.
- **When elderly respondents were asked whether they feel connected to their community, approx. 39% found disagreed with this** (29.2% of respondents disagreed while 9.8% of respondents said that they strongly disagreed with the fact.
- Almost every third elderly (33.5%) seemed neutral as they didn't clearly express their point of view on the subject.
- 27.5% of elderly respondents claimed that they feel connected with their community.

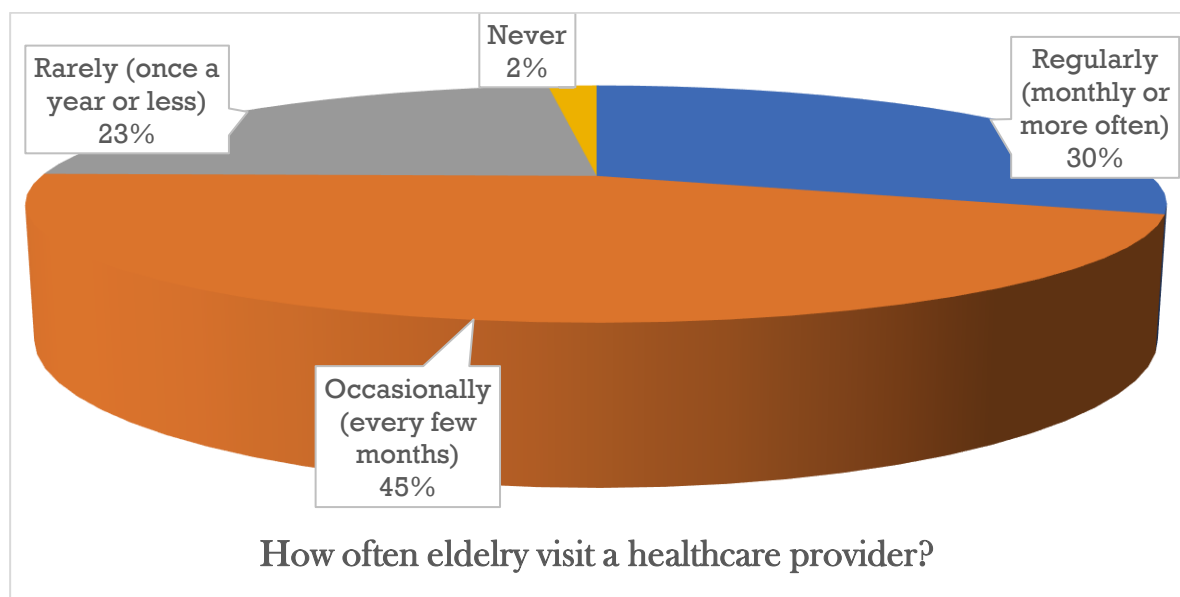


- Among 10000 elderly respondents, 4190 i.e. **41.9%** said that they enjoy their particular hobbies like gardening, farming, playing games, etc visiting clubs/recreation centers the most. 3488 i.e. 34.87% said that enjoy religious activities or spiritual gatherings (visiting religious places, Satsang, etc.).
- 25.6% of them said they like to engage in community / social/cultural events most and 8.5% of the elderly said they enjoy volunteering activities most.
- 21.3% of respondents said that enjoy other activities like politics, business/trade, etc.



During the study, it was attempted to assess the current health and well-being status of elderly respondents.

- **According to 65.3% of them, their overall health can be termed as fair, good, or excellent.** Overall 31.1% said that their health condition is fair, 16.5% said that it's good and 7.6% said that they enjoy excellent health in old age.
- 34.9% of elderly respondents said that their existing health status is poor or very poor.
- Among all, over 31.9% of respondents reported admitted that they are facing one or more chronic health conditions.

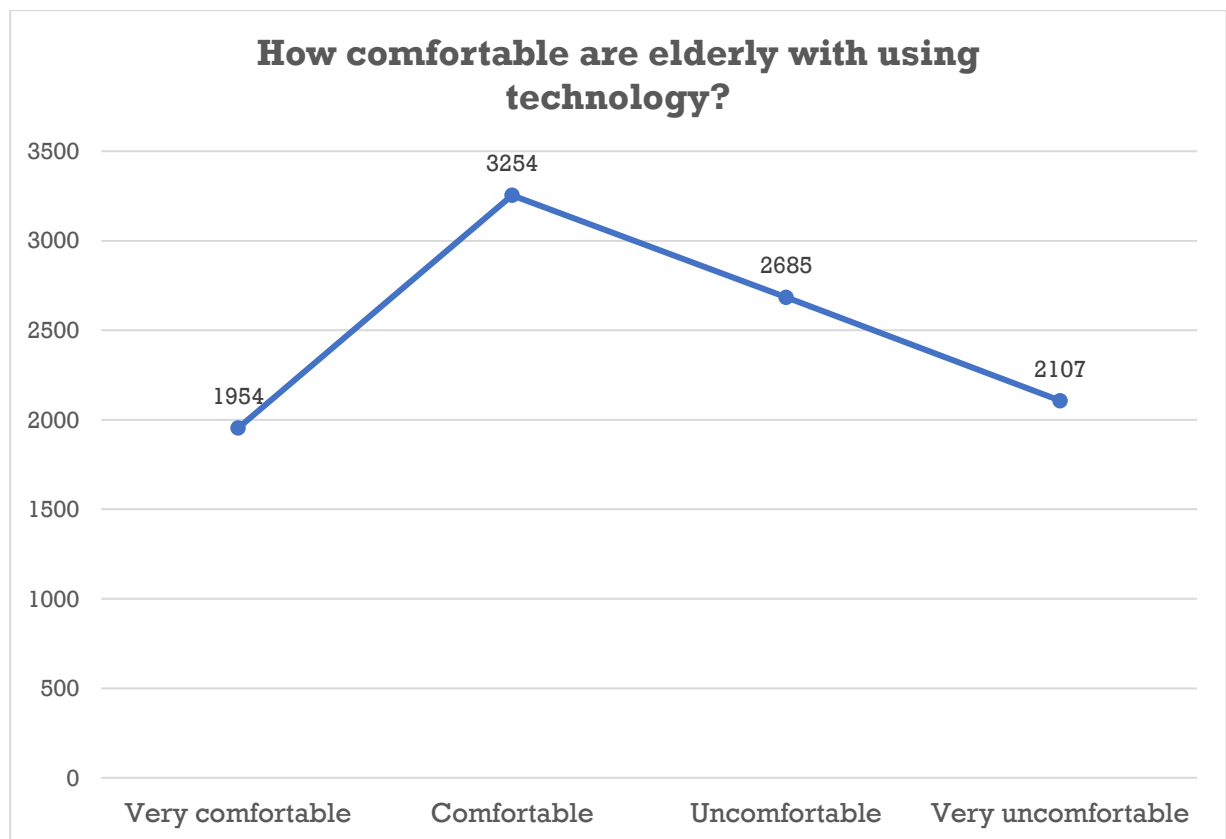


- **45.2% of elderly respondents said that they visit healthcare facilities occasionally (generally when there is a need to visit)**

- 30.2% of elderly respondents informed that they visit healthcare facilities regularly (monthly or more often)
- Approx. 23% of respondents claimed that they rarely (Once a year or less) visit healthcare facilities and 1.8% of respondents said that they never got to healthcare facilities and prefer home remedies in case of need of medical attention.

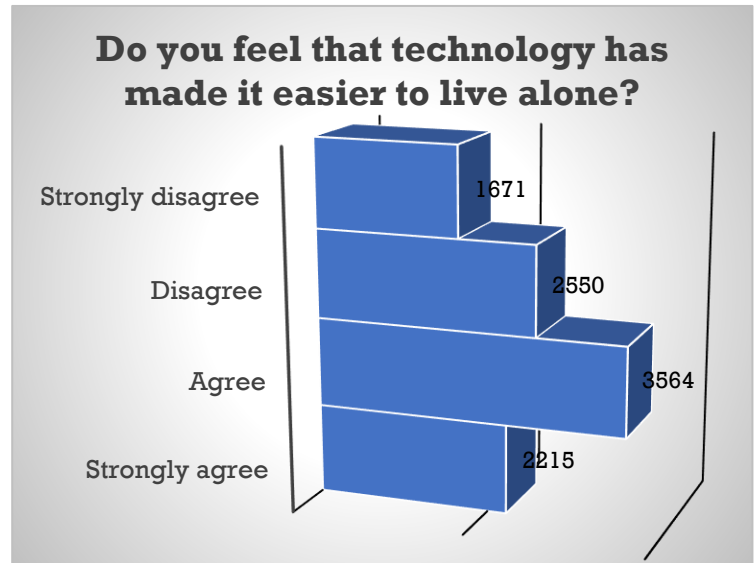
Technology and Independence

- During the study, it was also revealed that among all respondents **more than 23.6% of them were not using digital technology (smartphone/computer, etc.)**
- Only **76.4% of elderly respondents claimed that they use technology in their day-to-day lives.**



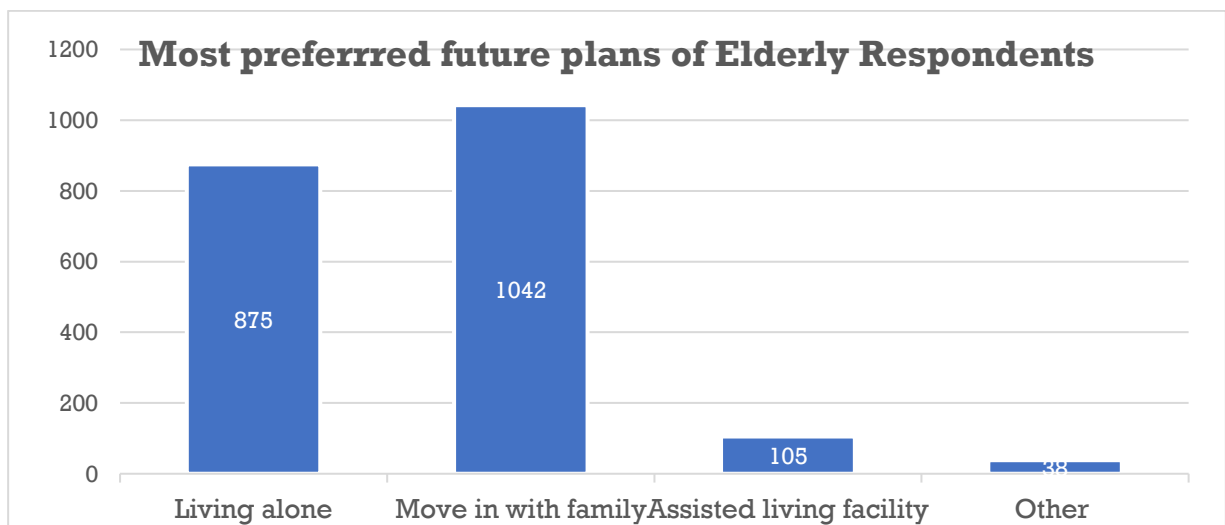
- 19.5% of elderly respondents accepted that they are very comfortable using digital technology and 32.5% of respondents said that they feel comfortable while using smartphones etc.
- 26.6% of elderly respondents claimed that they are uncomfortable with mobile devices and 21.1% admitted that they are very uncomfortable with modern digital gadgets.
- Survey data collected from selected elderly respondents suggest that **most of the elderly respondents (57.8%) feel that technology has made it easier to live alone in old age.**

- Overall 35.6% of respondents agreed with this while 22.2% of elderly respondents strongly agreed with this.
- 42.2% of elderly respondents were found to think otherwise and disagreed with the fact that technology has made it easier to live alone in old age.



Future Planning

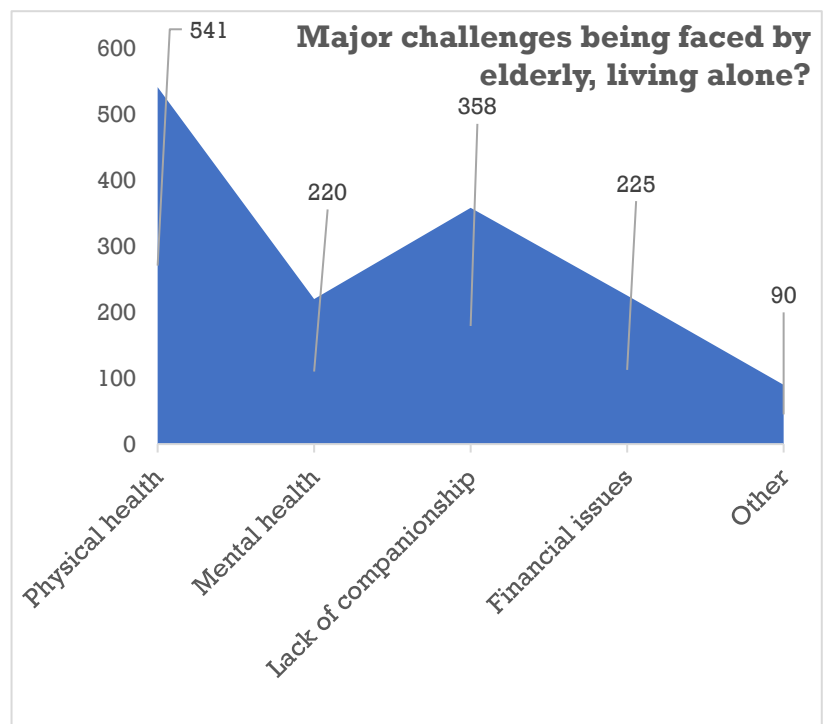
- During the survey, it was noticed that most older persons in India have no plans for their future living arrangements, as **79.4% of sample respondents elderly admitted that they have no such plans so far.**
- Only 20.6% of respondents i.e. 2060 out of 10000 older persons reportedly claimed that they have certain future living plans.



- Among 2060 elderly with future living plans, 1042 respondents i.e. 50.6% said that they will move in with family in the future.
- 42.5% of them i.e. 875 said that are going to live alone in old age. 5.1% of such elderly were thinking about moving into some kind of assisted living facility and 1.8% of respondents have other future living plans.

Study on Older Persons Living Alone in Old Age

- When it was attempted to assess the major challenges being faced by old people, living alone, it was found that according to **39% of respondents** (541 respondents out of 1434 elderly respondents), **maintaining physical health is the biggest challenge for them.**
- Out of 1434 elderly respondents, 358 respondents (31.7%) complained that lack of companionship is a major challenge in their opinion.
- According to 225 elderly respondents (15.7%), financial issues hit them very hard, which is the biggest challenge in their opinion.
- Issues related to mental health are the most critical issues as per 220 elderly respondents.
- Approx. 6.3% of respondents highlighted issues other than those mentioned above as the most critical challenges.

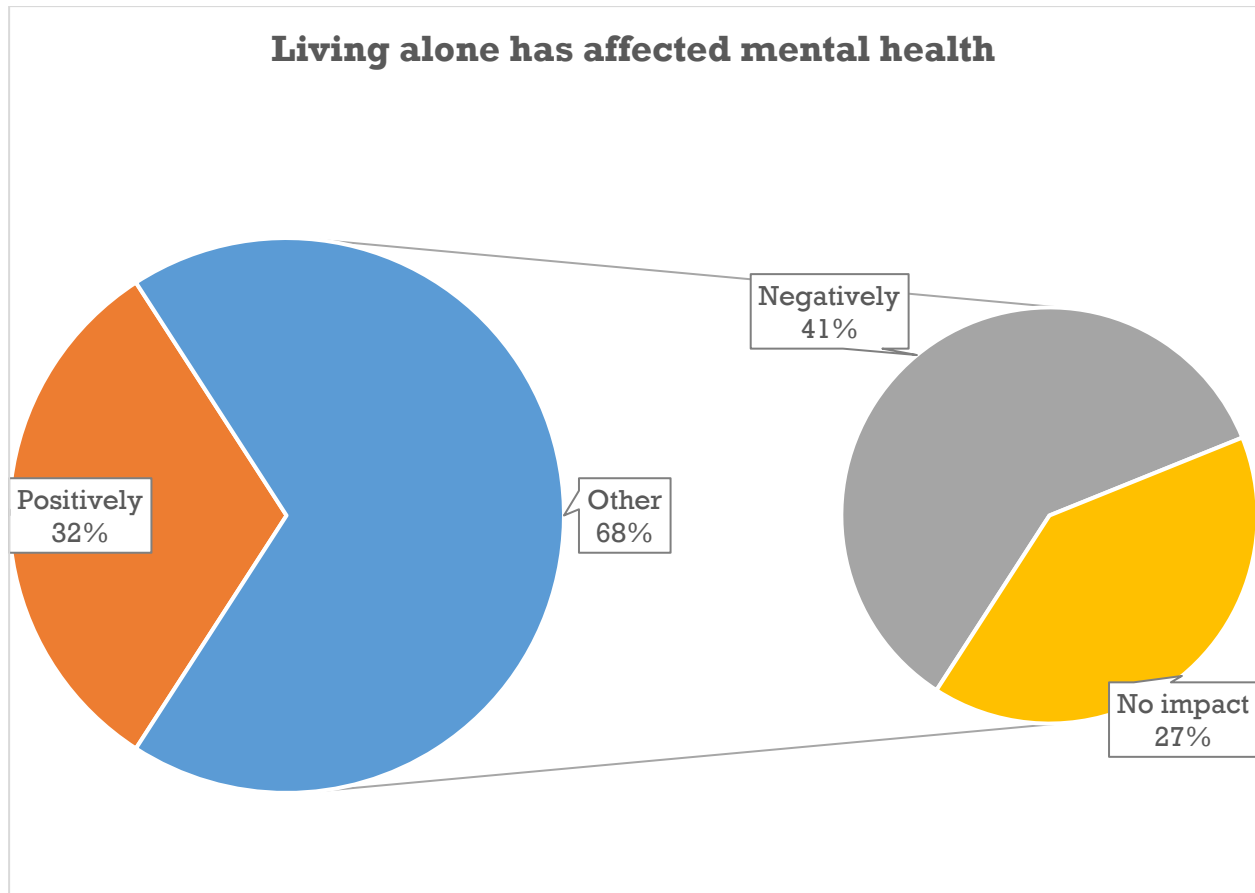


Relationship between Mind and Solo Aging

The relationship between the mind and solo ageing was also studied and it was found that mental resilience is important for solo ageing. During the survey, every second respondent recognized the role of mental resilience for solo ageing as extremely important.

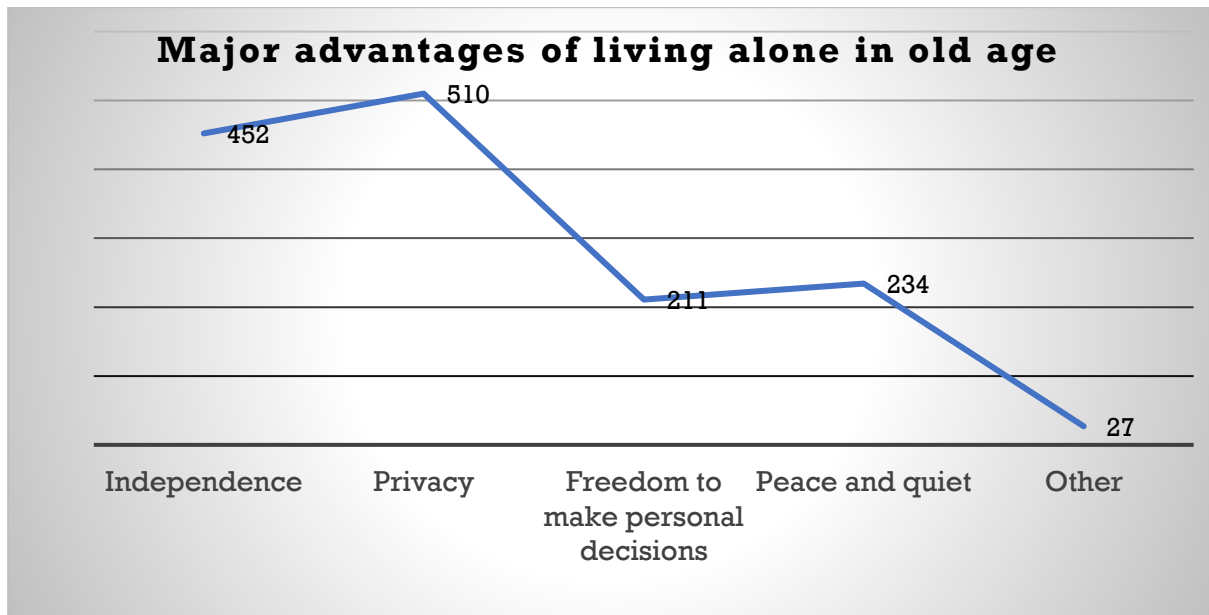
- **Almost 1/4 of elderly respondents admitted that the role of the mind in solo ageing is very important.**
- 15.5% of elderly respondents said that mental resilience is moderately important for solo ageing. For 7% elderly, it's only slightly important.
- Only 109% of the elderly respondents opined that the mind has no significant role so far as solo ageing is concerned.

- Among elderly respondents, living alone, 68.4% of respondents claimed that they practice some kind of mental health exercise such as meditation, mindfulness, yoga, etc. for sound mental health.

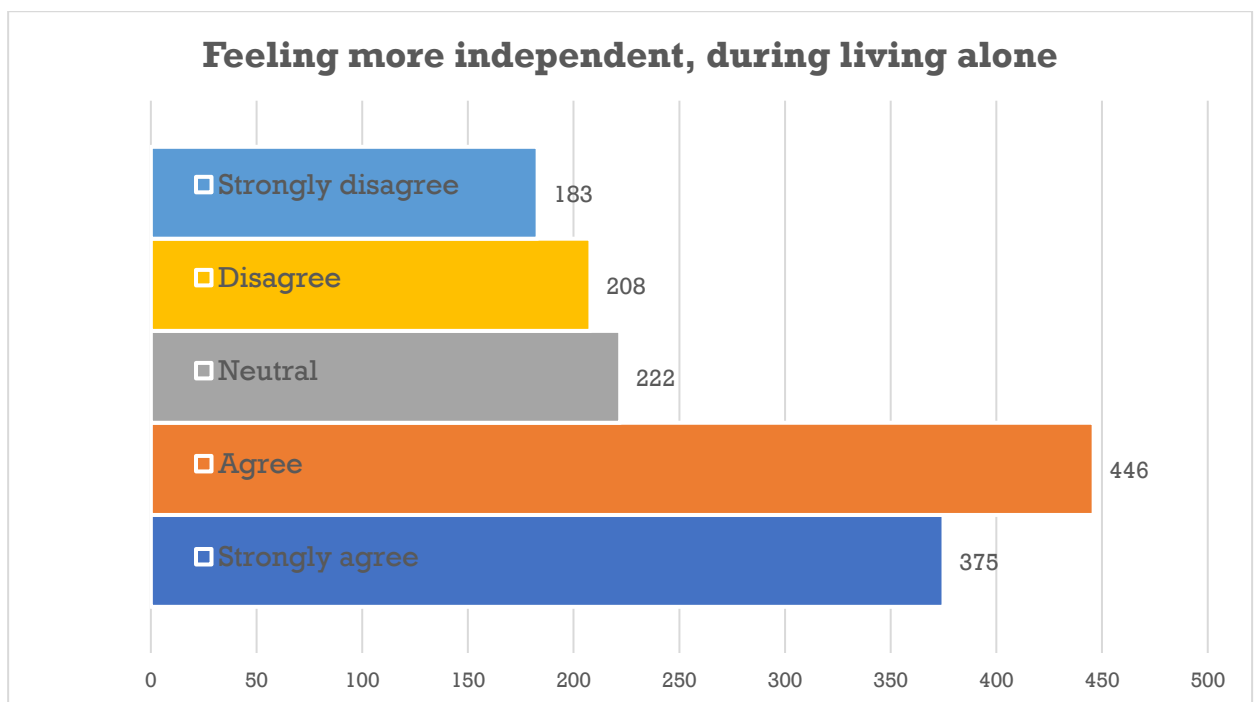


Advantages of Living Alone (Solo Ageing)

- **According to 35.6% of old people, who were living alone and approached during the survey admitted that the most important advantage of living alone is Enjoying Privacy.** Out of 1434 elderly 510 respondents claimed that in their opinion Privacy is the biggest advantage of solo ageing.
- 31.5% of elderly respondents in this category (452 out of 1434) termed Independence in Old age as a major advantage of solo aging.
- 16.3% of elderly respondents said that Peace is a major benefit of living alone in old age. While 14.7% of elderly respondents said that the Freedom to make personal decisions is the most important benefit of solo aging.

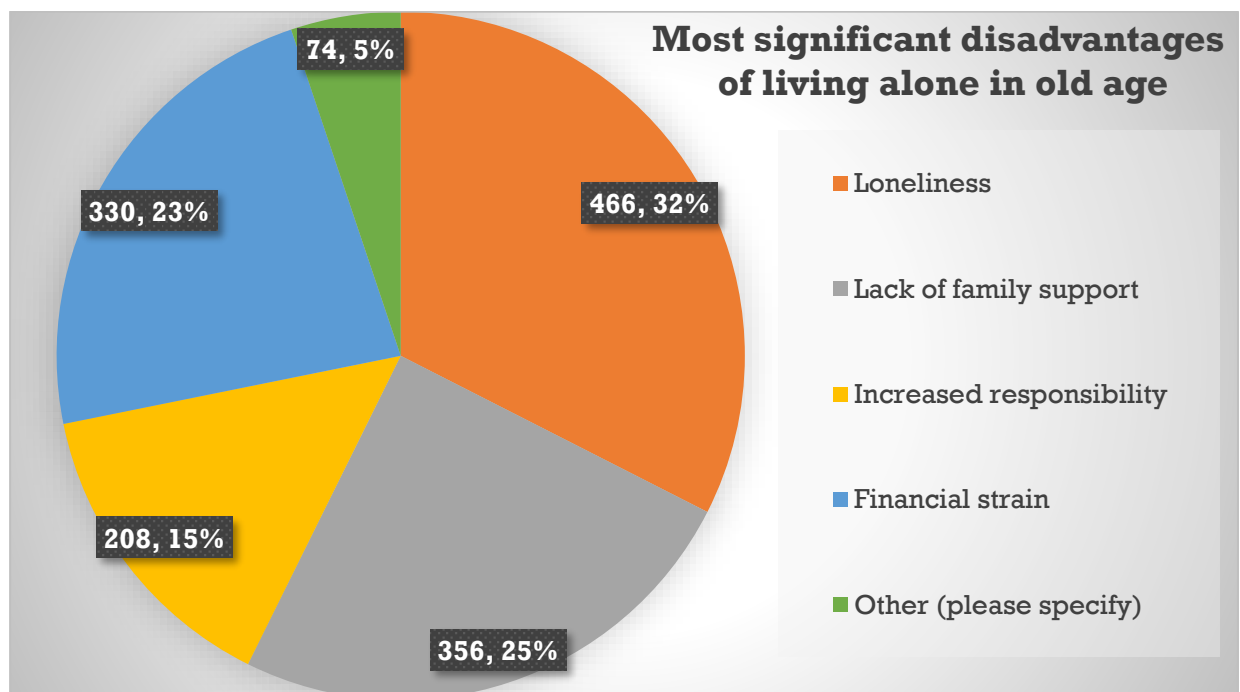


- When it was tried to assess the level of independence of old people living alone, it was found that **most of the respondents (57.3%) agreed that they feel more independent living alone**. Overall, 31.1% of elderly respondents (living alone) said that they agreed while 26.2% of respondents said that they strongly agreed that they feel more independent living alone.
- 15.5% of respondents (222 out of 1434) claimed that they don't see any impact on their independence in old age.
- 27.3% of elderly living alone said that they don't agree or strongly disagree with the fact that people enjoy more independence when they live alone.



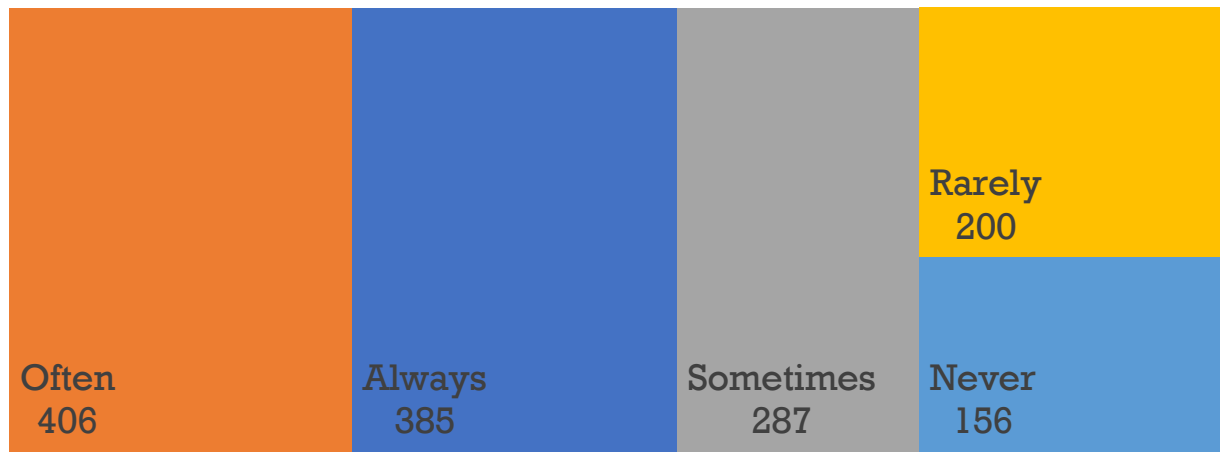
Disadvantages of Living Alone

- During the survey, **almost 1/3rd of respondents in the category of old people living alone (32.5%)** said that **loneliness is most significant disadvantage of living alone** in old age.
- **About every fourth of elderly people (who are living alone) claimed that they also lack family support and, in their opinion, the most significant disadvantage of Solo Ageing.**
- 23% of elderly respondents in this category complained that financial strain remains the most significant challenge as they have limited income in old age, but they have to spend more on maintaining their health and wellbeing.
- 14.5% of respondents told the interviewers that they have increased responsibilities due to solo ageing, which is the most significant disadvantage in their opinion.



- Among elderly respondents, living alone, **26.8% admitted that they always worry about their health in the future as they will have to depend on others in case they fall sick.**
- 28.3% of respondents expressed their worry and said that they often worried about it and 20% of respondents admitted that they worry but sometimes, not always or more often.
Only 24.8 % of them said that they rarely or never worried about their health condition in the future.

Elderly worry about who will take care of them if they fall ill?

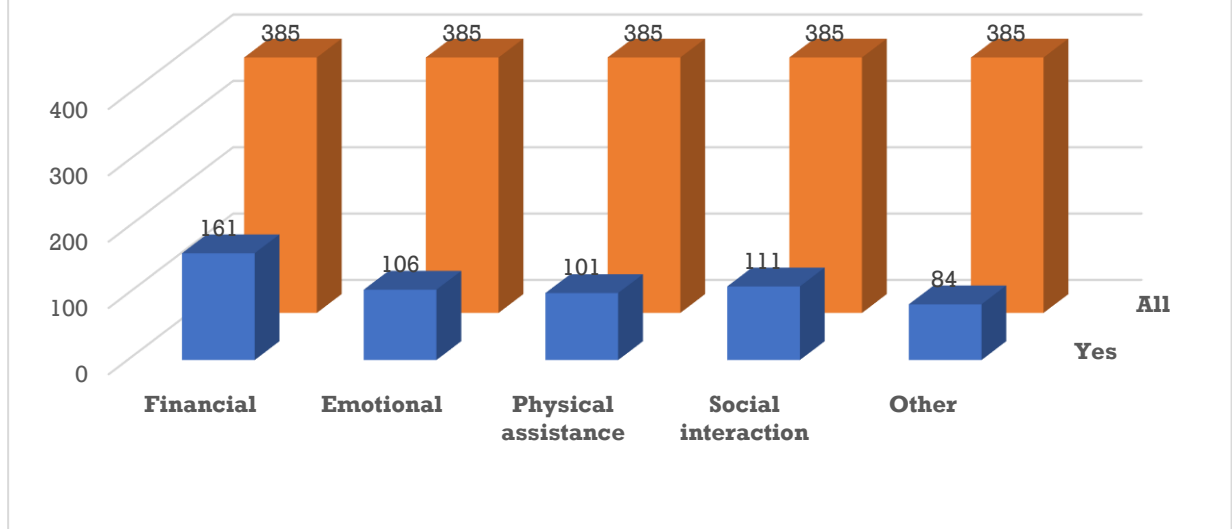


- According to 36.3% of old people (living alone), Solo Aging is both, a bliss and pain for them.
- 22.4% of them said that in their opinion it's a bliss for them, that should be enjoyed.
- 34.2% of such respondents said that Solo Aging is a painful experience for them.

Family Support

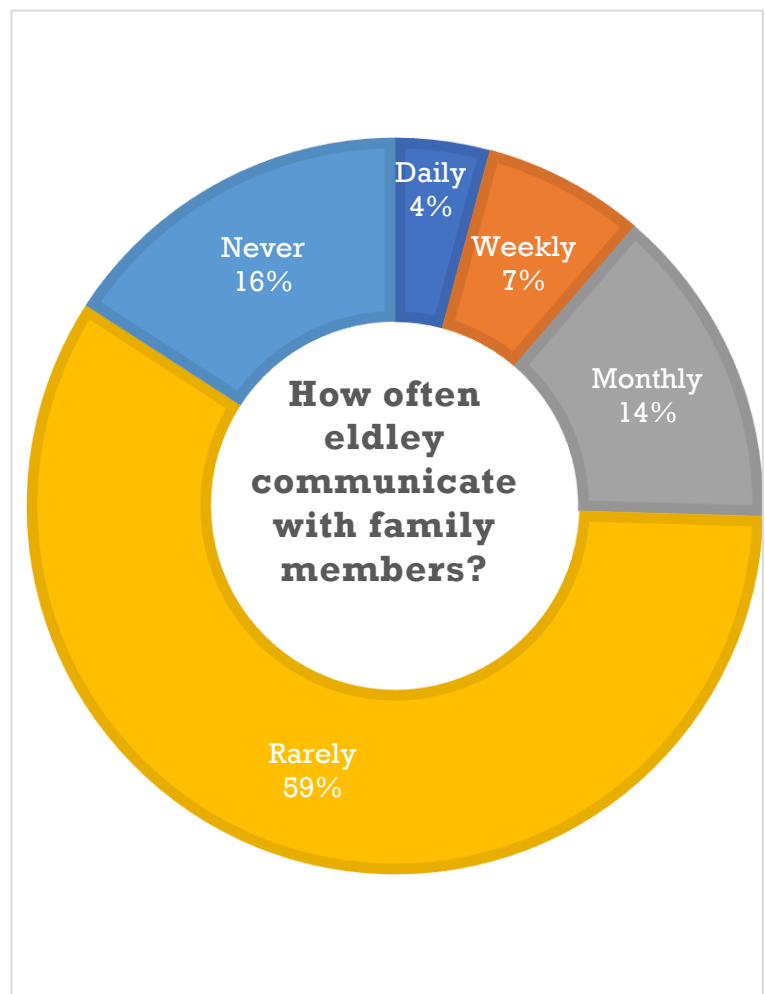
- Among elderly respondents, living alone, 26.8% of them admitted that they receive support from their respective family members.
- Among them, 73.2% of respondents said that they don't receive any kind of family support.

Kind of Support from Family received by old people living alone



- When asked about the kind of support they receive while living alone, **most of them i.e. 41.8% said that they receive financial support from their family members.**
- 28.8% of elderly respondents living alone said that interacted with their family members more often and felt socially connected with them.
- 27.5% of such elderly claimed that they are emotionally attached to their family as they get emotional support from family members
- 26.2% of the elderly respondents (among those living alone) accepted that they receive physical assistance from their family members.
- 21.8% of respondents said that they receive another kind of family support while living alone such as medical support, legal help, etc.

- When it was tried to assess the level of relationship of older people with family members, it was found that **only 4.2% of respondents were in touch with their family members regularly.**
- 7.1% of them said that they communicate with their family members on an average weekly basis, while 14.2% of the elderly said that they talk to their children once a while during the month.
- Most elderly i.e. 58.7% claimed that they rarely communicate with their family members/children and 15.8% of elderly respondents admitted that they never communicate with their family members.



OBSERVATIONS

The absence of family support is a significant challenge for many older persons. Family often plays a crucial role in providing emotional comfort, assisting with daily activities, and ensuring overall well-being. Without this support, older individuals may struggle with feelings of abandonment and insecurity. Practical issues such as managing healthcare, finances, and household tasks become more difficult without family assistance. Moreover, the emotional gap left by the absence of family can lead to increased loneliness and stress, impacting both mental and physical health. Older persons without family support must often rely on external services, which may not provide the same level of care or emotional connection.

Lack of psychological support can be detrimental to the mental health of older persons. Emotional and psychological challenges such as grief, anxiety, depression, and fear of the future are common in old age. Without access to counseling or therapy, these issues can escalate, leading to a decline in overall well-being. Psychological support provides a space for older persons to express their feelings, receive validation, and develop coping strategies. The absence of such support can result in unaddressed emotional pain and increased mental health issues, making it harder for older persons to navigate the complexities of aging and maintain a positive outlook on life.



Emotions are true companions of human beings and matter most in old age

Emotions are intrinsic to the human experience, acting as constant companions throughout life. In old age, they become even more significant as individuals reflect on their lives and cope with new challenges. Positive emotions such as happiness, contentment, and love provide comfort and enhance well-being. They help build resilience, allowing older persons to face difficulties with a positive mindset. Negative emotions, though challenging, also play a role in personal growth and adaptation. Understanding and managing emotions is crucial in old age, as they significantly impact mental health, relationships, and overall quality of life.

Role of Emotions in Old Age in a Fast-Changing IT-Dominated World

In a rapidly evolving IT-dominated world, emotions play a critical role in the lives of older persons. While technology offers numerous benefits, such as easier communication and access to information, it can also lead to feelings of alienation and frustration among those less familiar with it. Emotions like curiosity and willingness to learn can help older persons embrace new technologies, enhancing their connectivity and independence. Emotional resilience is essential to cope with the rapid pace of change and the potential stress it brings. Positive emotions such as joy and excitement can be derived from connecting with loved ones through social media or discovering new interests online. Conversely, emotions like anxiety and fear may arise from cyber security concerns or the complexity of new devices. Older persons must seek support and training to build their confidence in using technology. Emotional intelligence helps them navigate these changes, enabling them to balance technological advancements with their emotional needs. Ultimately, emotions act as a bridge, helping older persons adapt to and benefit from the digital age while maintaining their mental and emotional well-being.



REPRESENTATIVE STATEMENTS

“After the loss of my husband and with my children now settled in other cities, I find myself living alone without immediate family support. Although I am financially secure thanks to my children’s support, I rely heavily on my neighbors and community for social interaction and assistance. While I appreciate their help, I often miss having close family around.”

- Premlata Aggarwal, 72, Agra, UP

“Having retired from a multinational company, I initially lived with my son’s family. Due to some interpersonal issues, I chose to live independently for a more peaceful and self-reliant life. My wife prefers to stay with our son’s family to look after grandchildren. I now enjoy greater freedom and maintain regular contact with my wife and children. For those who are active, healthy, and financially stable, living alone can be a positive choice in old age. “

- Sudeep Kumar Taneja, 66, Chandigarh

“As a widow for over 15 years, I now live alone and often feel the sting of loneliness and isolation. My interactions with people around my house and old friends help me pass the time, but I struggle with psychological challenges and receive minimal support from my children for my healthcare and daily needs. My sense of alienation and difficulty has grown with age. “

- Roopa Khandekar, 80, Pune, Maharashtra

“After the death of my husband, my children moved to cities for work and left me alone in my village home. Initially, I managed fine, but now I face several age-related issues such as arthritis, weakness, and sensory problems. I rely on medication and help for daily tasks and often miss the presence of my family. Despite adapting my lifestyle, I frequently feel lonely and disconnected. “

- Vidya Devi Kushwaha, 77, Dist-Bikaner, Rajasthan



RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the ever-growing challenges related to Solo Ageing, loneliness and isolation in old age, and even alienation and marginalization of older people, concerned stakeholders, including community members, community leaders, and governments at all levels, need to acknowledge and understand the ground realities.

There is an urgent need to create awareness about fast changing needs of older people, sensitize the community about the changing lifestyle of people in old age, bridge the ever-widening gap between generations, and ultimately prepare younger generations for better and happier old age.

Based on observations and study findings following are some ideal recommendations;

- Enhance healthcare services tailored to older persons, particularly those living alone, including regular home visits by healthcare professionals, telemedicine options, and specialized geriatric care.
- Create gainful engagement and occupational activities for older persons
- Strengthen legal frameworks to protect elderly rights and provide all possible assistance programs for those in need.
- Advocate for laws that ensure elder protection and financial security and Create easy-to-access support services for legal and financial issues.
- Develop programs to address the emotional well-being of older persons such as counseling services, support groups, and community activities.
- Create networks of volunteers and professional caregivers to offer companionship and assistance to older persons living alone.
- Utilize technology to enhance the quality of life in old age, including emergency alert systems, smart home devices, and digital literacy training.
- Create and improve elderly-friendly transportation infrastructure to access healthcare, shopping, and social activities.
- Establish local community programs that provide practical support, such as home maintenance, safety and security, legal aid, etc.
- Advocate for policies that support aging-in-place and improve the quality of life for older persons including pension reforms, healthcare benefits, and anti-discrimination measures.
- Conduct sensitization programs at school levels to sensitize younger students towards their elderly family members.
- Encourage participation of older persons in mainstream activities.





Agewell Foundation

Agewell Foundation is a not-for-profit NGO that has been working for the welfare and empowerment of older persons of India since 1999. Agewell interacts with over 25000 older persons daily through its volunteers' nationwide network. Recognizing the work being done by Agewell Foundation ECOSOC granted Special Consultative Status to Agewell Foundation at United Nations in 2011. It is associated with the Department of Public Information, United Nations (UN-DPI-NGO). Agewell Foundation is currently associated with the Working Group on Awareness and Capacity Building for Senior Citizens, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment; Sub-Group on Elderly Care, under NITI Aayog's CSOs Standing Committee and Committee of Experts on "impact of COVID-19 pandemic on human rights and future response", National Human Rights Commission.

Agewell Foundation

*(In Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC at United Nations since 2011)
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