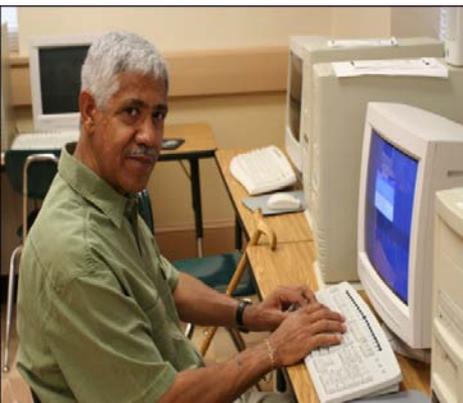




Aging in India: A conflict between industrialization and changing cultural values

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Presenter Disclosures

Yashwant Pathak
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The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

“No relationships to disclose”

A Comment by a senior citizen



- *“I am 65 years old and I lost my wife about two years ago. But for the feeling of loneliness which has me in its grip every once in a while, I am happily placed in life.*
- *My children are happily married and settled. They look after me well but have their limitations. I am beginning to feel that it will become difficult to cope with life without a partner.*
- *Much of life’s charm has indeed vanished ever since the death of my wife. I feel like I have everything and yet nothing”*

(Times of India, 30 March 1995)

Aging a New Challenge for Indian Society



OLD & VULNERABLE

● In 2007, **17** senior citizens were murdered, while in 2008, the figure came down to **12**

A special helpline **1291** – has been started by Delhi Police to help the elderly

● Senior citizens are advised by the police to only deal with reputed property dealers while considering a transaction. Police assistance can also be sought in case there is any doubt

There are more than **7450** senior citizens registered with Delhi Police

- The rise in the number of those who are non-industrious and do not generate any expectation immediately raises an economic problem.
It is also a social problem: Who is going to provide support to them and how?
- Apart from food and shelter, they also need medical care. They also crave love and tender care.
- They would like to interact, be heard, be visible, and would like a bit of space of their own and have a constructive and creative role to play in society.

The Societal Scenario



Increasing number of pensioners

- Today there are 77 million old people in India.
- This number is likely to rise to 177 million by 2025.
- Some of the facts related to our base of the society i.e. “Senior Citizens” are:
 - **90% are from unorganized sector with no social security.**
 - **40% live below poverty line.**
 - **75% are from the rural areas.**
 - **55% of the women 60+ in age are widows.**
 - **73% are illiterate.**

Defining ageing in India

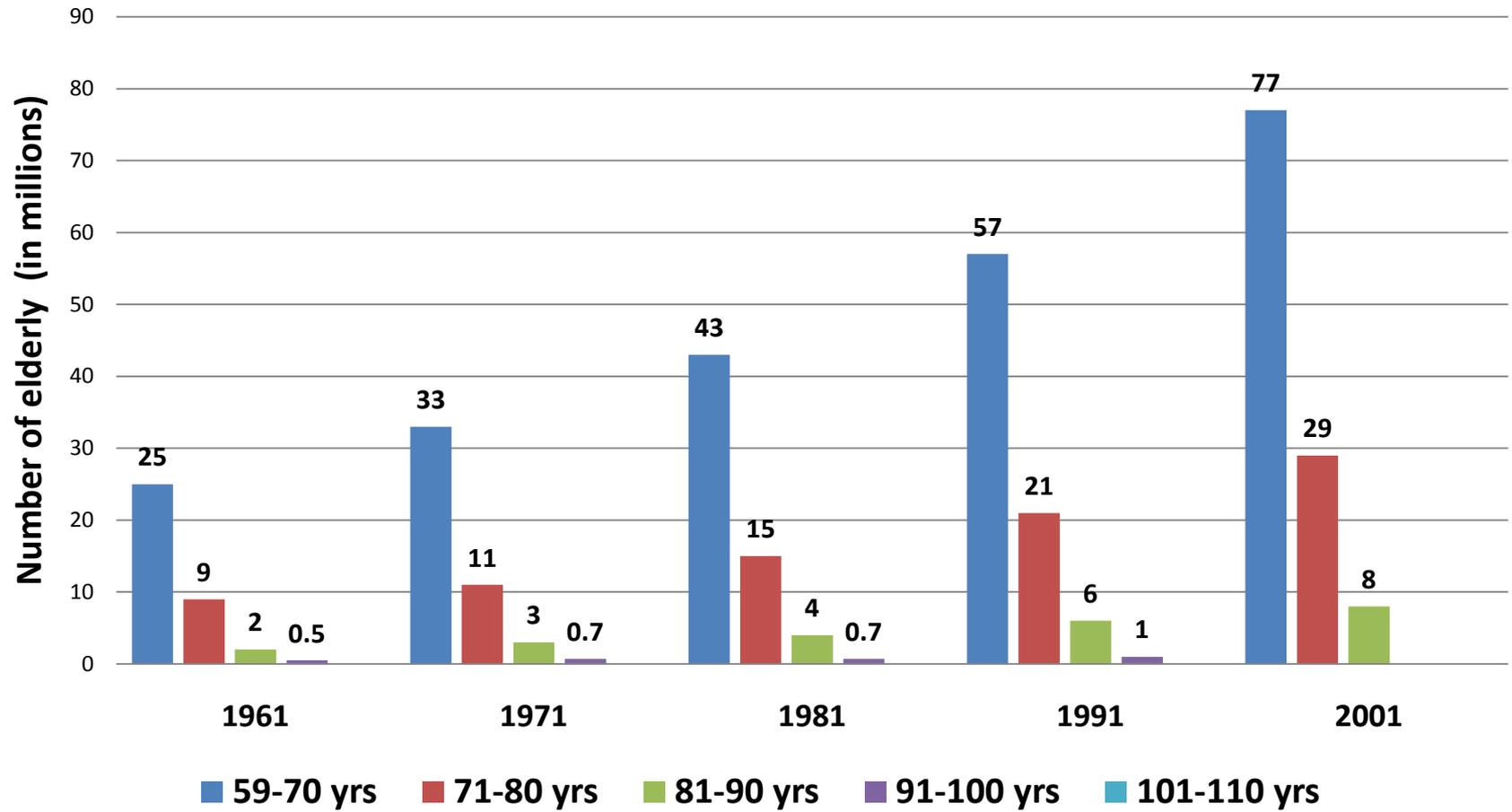
In ancient India, life span of one hundred years was divided into four stages:

- Bramhacarya (life of a student)
 - Grihasta ashram (householder)
 - Vanaprastha (forest dweller)
 - Samnyasa (ascetic)
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- There was a gradual move from personal, social to spiritual preoccupations with age.

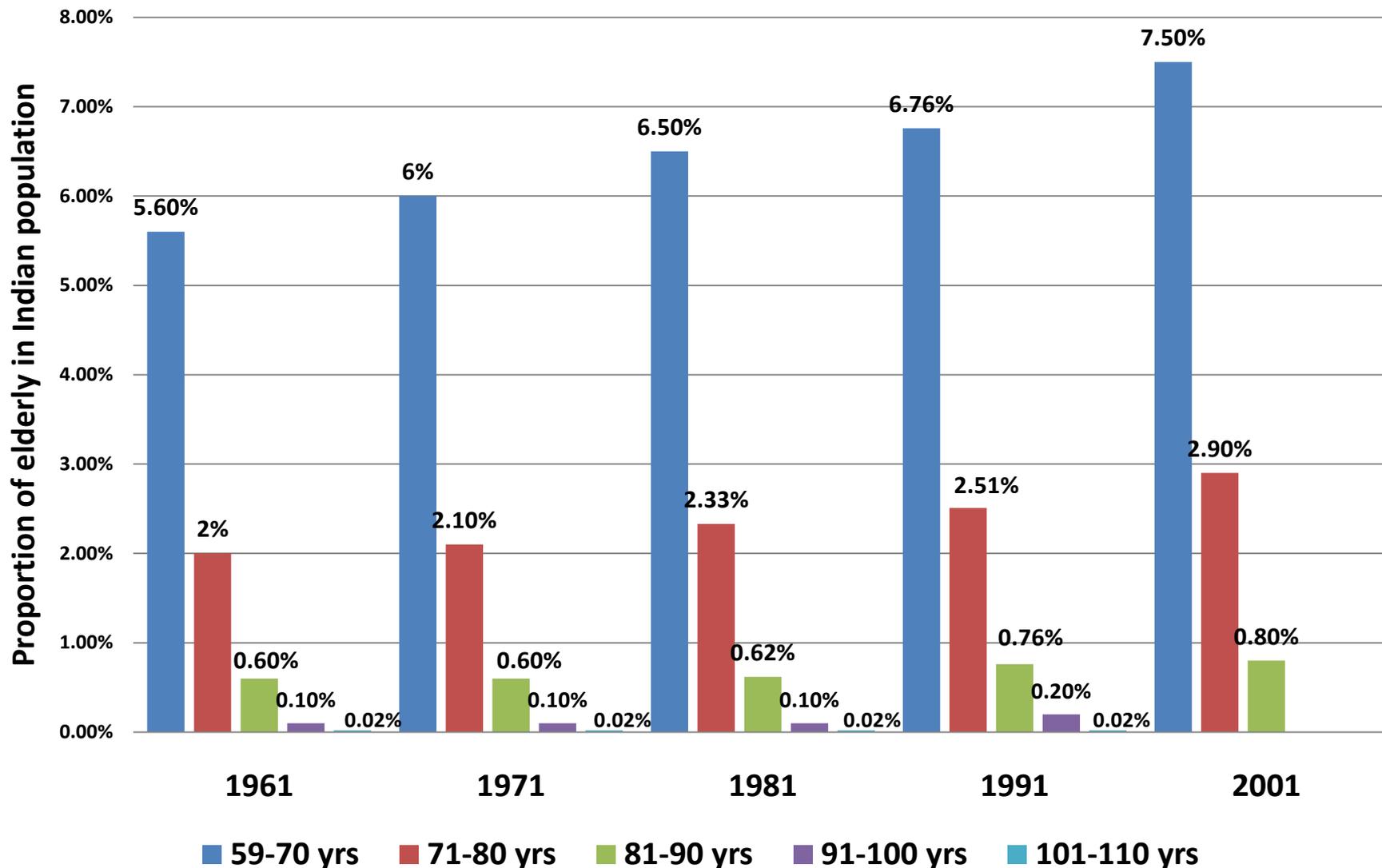
Ageing in India

- The UN defines a country as 'ageing' where the proportion of people over 60 reaches 7 %.
- In 2000 India exceeded that proportion(7.7%) and is expected to reach 12.6% in 2025.

Number of elderly in Indian population



Proportion of elderly in the Indian population



Elderly females versus elderly males

- India is one of the few countries in the world where males outnumber females.
- However, at any given age, contrary to what we would normally expect, there are more widows than widowers.
 - Female life expectancy at ages 60 and 70 is slightly higher than that of males.
- The preponderance of females in extreme old ages needs to be brought to the attention of planners and policy makers.

Reasons for more widows and related issues

Reasons:

- Longer life span of women compared to men,
- The general tendency for women to marry men older than themselves
- Besides, widowed men are more likely to remarry and thus restore their earlier status.

- According to the 2001 census, 33% of the elderly in India are without their life partners. The widowers among men form 15% compared to 50% widows.
- Loss of spouse is a major disaster in old age and such individuals deserve suitable and adequate social safety nets irrespective of gender.
- Designing policies to protect elderly females, particularly widows, should form a major welfare programme in the country.

Living arrangements for elderly

- Living patterns (arrangements):
 - living with the spouse,
 - living with children and
 - living in old age homes.
- Living alone or with the spouse: people who are not too old yet,
- Living with a child or grandchild : whereas for the oldest-old.
- Living arrangements are influenced by a variety of factors:
 - number and availability of children and other relatives,
 - kinship patterns of society,
 - location of household,
 - marital status,
 - financial status,
 - availability of services and
 - physical and mental well being of the elderly.
- Research has shown that changes in living arrangements, family structure and mode of retirement affect the old adversely.

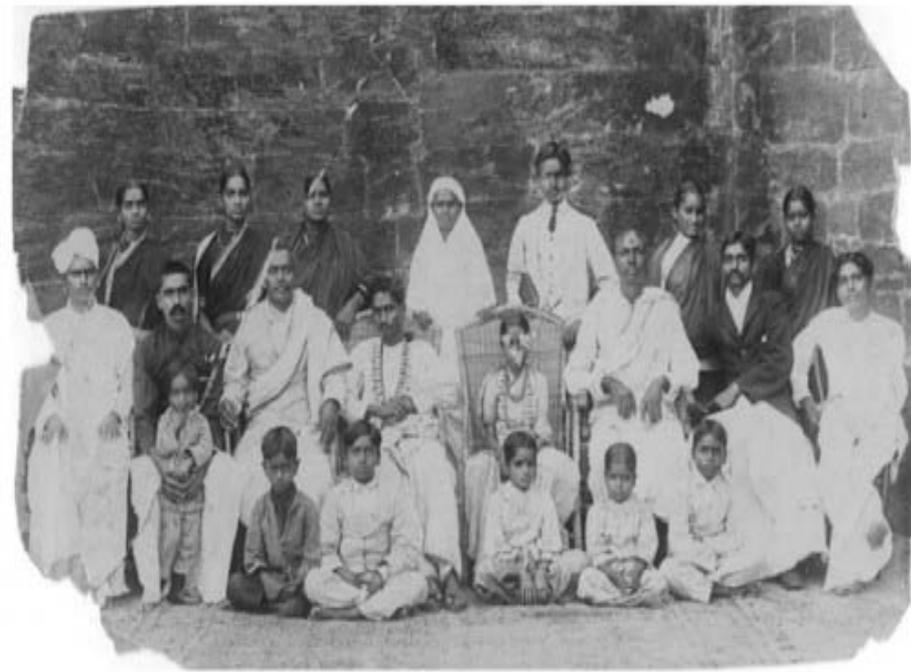


Living arrangements for elderly

- In India, the traditional practice has been for people to live with their children in old age; this is not necessarily with the intention of receiving support; often the rest of the family also benefits from the arrangement.
- For example, when the younger women of the household go to work, the grandparents take care of their children.
- The conventional living patterns among the elderly have changed drastically due to
 - reduction in fertility
 - increasing life expectancy at older ages
 - increasing industrialization

Loss of cultural values

- The declining joint family system in India and other countless factors have given rise to west-inspired phenomena of old age homes.
- Surprising cost of living and insufficient return on savings have almost pushed these senior citizens on roads.
- This act has called for the security net for the helpless, which is missing in many states in India.



Four generations living together in Joint family

Challenges for the Senior citizens



- **Safety and security of the elderly, especially those living alone are a concern.**
- **Due to their physical weakness and lonely status, senior citizens are easy targets for criminals, especially in urban surroundings.**



Support systems for elderly

- The elderly, being less independent, need the care and support of others in several respects.
- Financial / material support: a joint effort of the immediate family and society

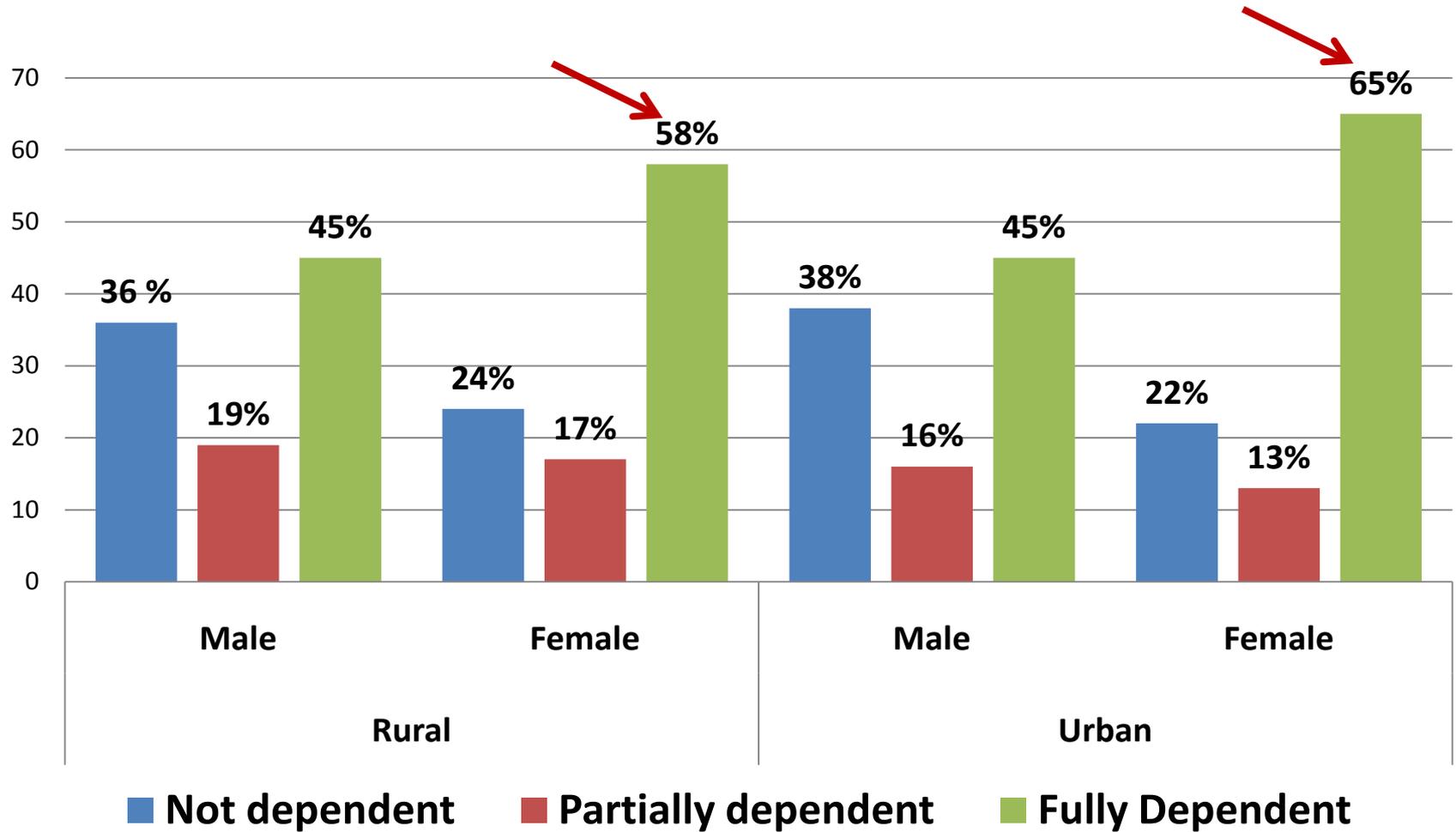
“Passive lifestyle increases risk of dementia !”



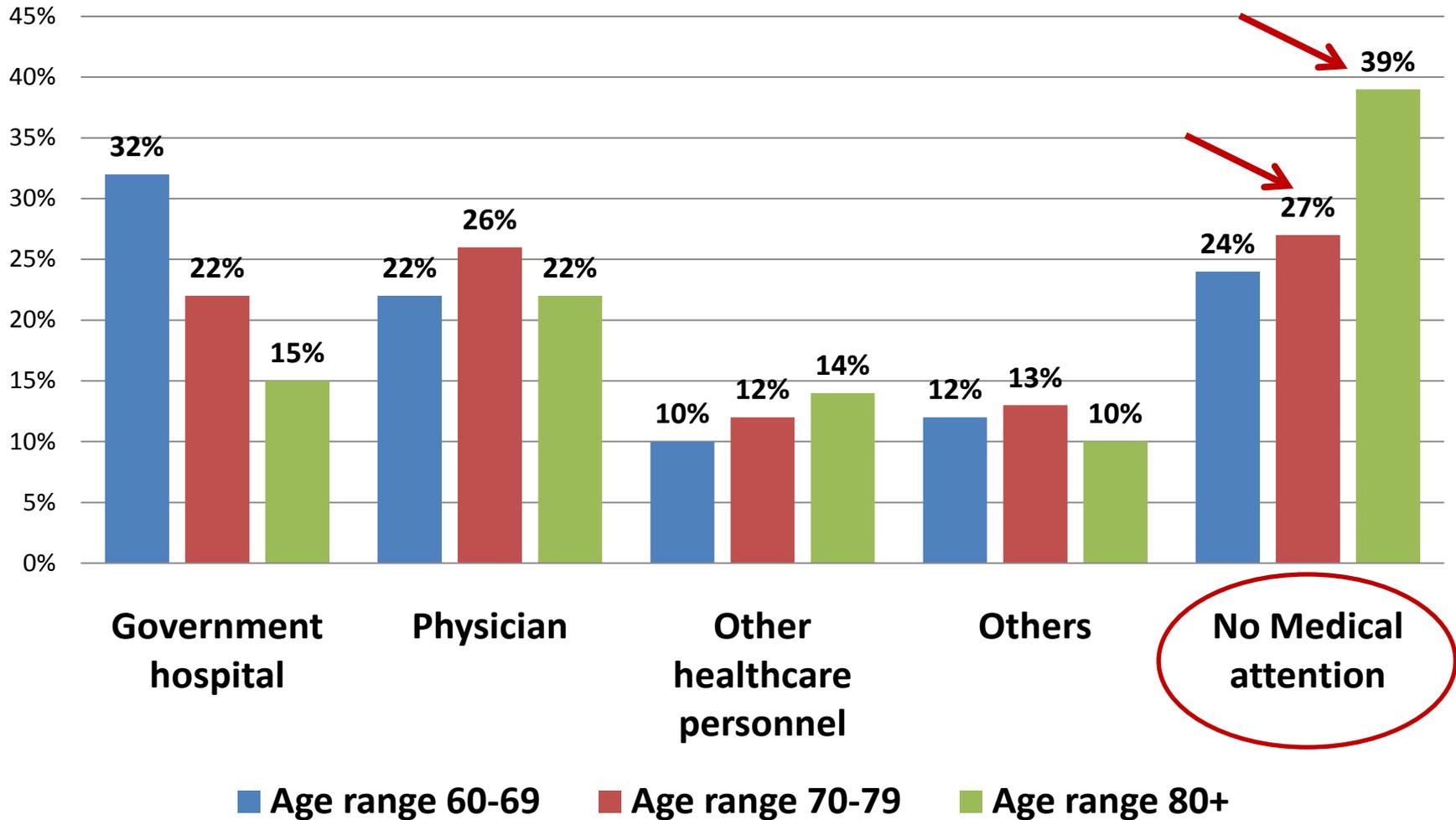
Remarriage opportunity for emotional stability

- Taking care of the elderly refers mainly to emotional support;
- on the other hand, support given to the elderly refers to financial and material support.
- Emotional support: expected from family members or persons who are close to them

Dependency among the Elderly



Medical attention at death



Legal protection

- Act for senior citizens is called the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.
- It extends to whole of India except for Jammu and Kashmir. It is applicable to all Indians and non-resident Indians.

Definitions for the Senior citizens act

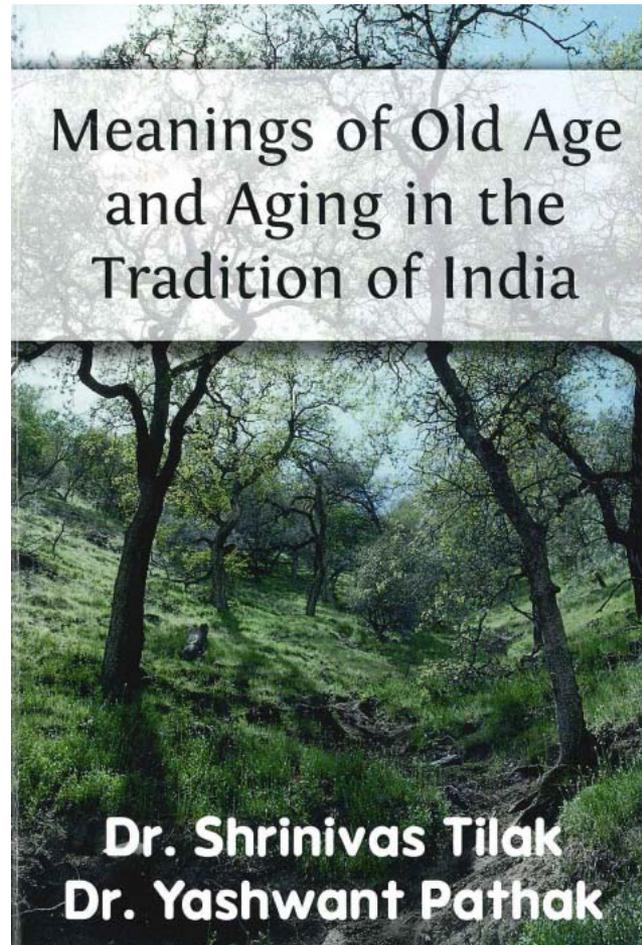
Here are the main definitions under the Act:

- **Children:** includes son, daughter, grandson and grand-daughter but does not include a minor.
- **Maintenance:** includes provision for food, clothing, residence and medical attendance and treatment.
- **Parent:** means father or mother whether biological, adoptive or step father or step mother, as the case may be, whether or not the father or the mother is a senior citizen.

Some policy suggestions

- Establishment of special geriatric wards within public sector health facilities
- Discounts in private hospitals through identity cards for the poor elderly
- Separate counters for elderly at the pharmacy so that they do not have to stand or wait in long lines
- Training of physicians and other health care personnel in geriatrics
- Treatment of vision (free eye check up and provision of free glasses) and hearing disorders (free hearing ability check up and provision of free hearing aid) of elderly

Book edited by Dr Yashwant Pathak



Meanings of Old Age
and Aging in the
Tradition of India

Dr. Shrinivas Tilak
Dr. Yashwant Pathak

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