

Health of the Elderly India: Emerging Evidences from LASI

The Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) is India's first and the world's largest study that provides a longitudinal database for designing policies and programmes for the older population in the broad domains of social, health, and economic wellbeing. The LASI is internationally harmonized with the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and its sister surveys around the world to enable cross-national comparisons. The LASI wave 1 (2017-18) covered a panel sample of 73,396 individuals aged 45 and above, including 31,902 elderly persons aged 60 and above, from all states of India. For the first time in India, LASI provides a comprehensive and nationally representative data set on the status of older adults, not only the self-reported health but also measured health conditions using a range of biomarkers. LASI confirms that the prevalence of chronic diseases increases with age, with a higher prevalence among older adults (aged 60 years and above) compared to those in the 45–59-year-old. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) are the major cause of hospitalization among older adults, yet health insurance coverage among this cohort is limited. Considerable gender and rural–urban differences persist in the disease burden among the aged. Among the elderly, the prevalence of probable major depression is higher among women than men, and those in rural than in urban areas, indicating major challenges ahead in tackling mental health issues of the elderly, which has received very little attention so far. What is more important is the significant differences observed between the self-reported and the measured prevalence of NCDs, particularly among the poor and rural populations.