

# An ageing India: outlooks for the future



Prevention  
Health and care  
International  
Costs  
Immunisation  
Life expectancy  
**Inequalities**  
Disease and conditions

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Author: Arunima Himawan

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## India is undergoing significant demographic change

We know that:

- This year, **India overtook China as the world's most populous country**
- The number of people in India aged 60 or over **is set to double by 2050**, which will constitute 20% of the population
- India's old age dependency ratio (the ratio of the population aged 65 and over against those aged 15 to 64) **is set to increase by more than 50%**, from 9% in 2020 to 15% by 2040 – and by 2060, it's expected to reach 26%

While still a comparatively young country, India's population is ageing, and fast. How the country responds and adapts to an ageing population in a short time span, helping its citizens live not just longer but also healthier lives, will be crucial.

The average life span increased by 7% between 2000-2019. This increase is part of a much larger picture that shows a sharp improvement in life expectancy over the last five decades, largely due to decreases in infant and child mortality. But life expectancy has increased more slowly than it has for most other large middle-income countries.

Equally, the average number of healthy years lived, or 'health span', improved by 8% between 2000 and 2019. While this progress is excellent, all too often poor health in India arises from preventable diseases; suggesting more needs to be done to meet its people's basic needs: nutrition, comprehensive vaccination, hygiene, and access to primary healthcare.

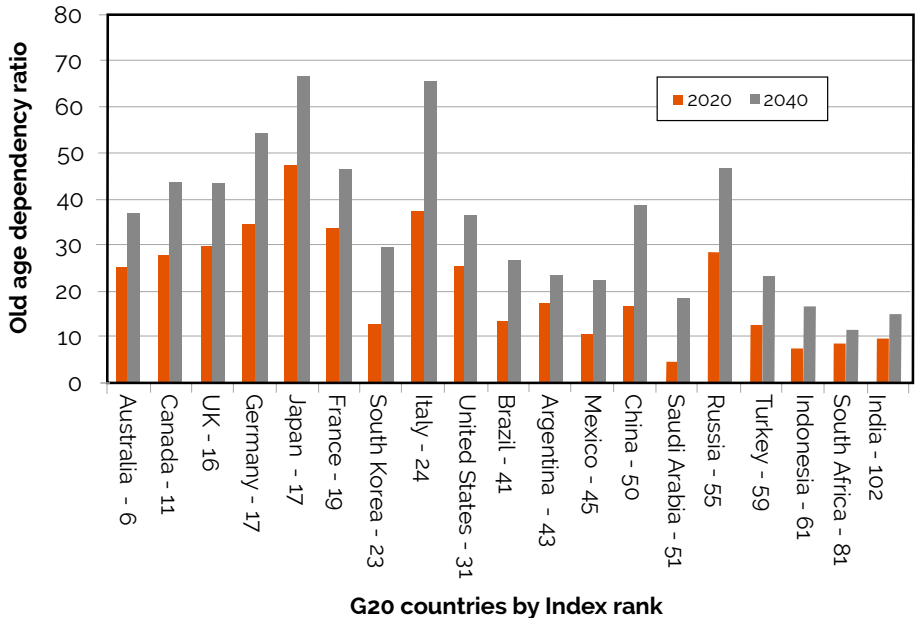
Our Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index ranks 121 countries on six healthy ageing metrics: life span, health span, work span, income, environmental performance and happiness.<sup>a</sup> This allows us to compare how sustainably countries have adapted to increased longevity. We also compare the Index rankings with other factors such as health spend, prevention measures, and access to healthcare. Through analysis, we can identify the issues that drive good and poor performance, as well as the actions countries would need to take if they wish to improve their global ranking.

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<sup>a</sup>You can learn more about the Index [here](#). All data used in this publication is referenced on our Index website unless specified otherwise. We use "pre-Covid" data from 2019, unless specified otherwise.

## G20 countries with a higher Index ranking have a higher old age dependency ratio

Figure 1: Old age dependency ratios and Index rankings for different G20 countries



India's old age dependency ratio is much lower than other G20 countries,<sup>1</sup> but it will be considered a "super ageing nation" (this is when at least 20% of a country's population is aged 65 or over), by 2050. With India currently home to the second largest population of adults aged 65 and over (84.9 million citizens)<sup>2</sup> there's an urgent need for policy makers to act.

Under India's presidency, this makes the 2023 G20 a key opportunity to help governments prepare to support longer, healthier lives.

# How India can prepare for an ageing society

## 1. Investment in preventative healthcare

**India ranks 102<sup>nd</sup> of 121 on the Healthy Ageing and Prevention Index** – the lowest of all the G20 countries.

Investing in prevention is the most effective way to keep people healthier for longer; its benefits extend well beyond the healthcare system. We know that:

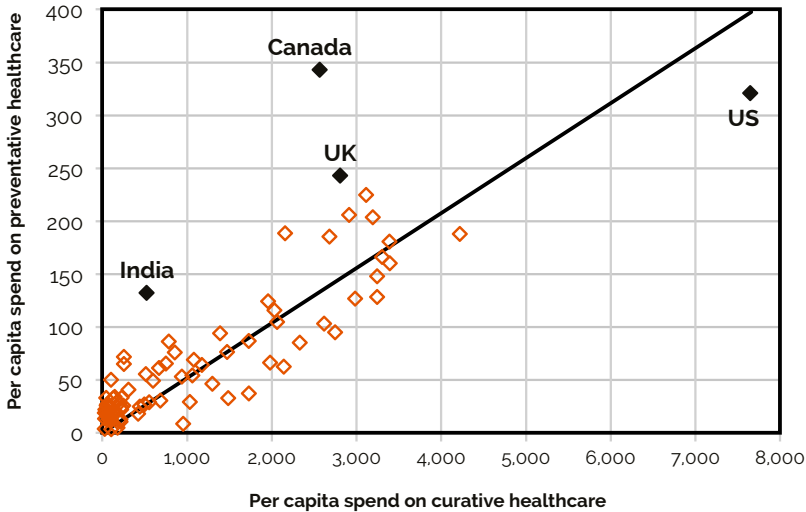
- G20 citizens aged 50 and over collectively lived 118 million years with disability in 2019, due to largely preventable diseases<sup>3</sup>
- For the period 2020–2030, the global healthcare cost of all preventable non-communicable diseases and mental health conditions will be \$301.8 billion<sup>4</sup>
- Preventable conditions reduce productivity among G20 citizens aged 50 to 64, costing economies \$1.02 trillion each year
  - This is close to the estimated loss of global workers' income caused by the COVID-19 pandemic during the first half of 2021<sup>5</sup>

Even a small increase in spending on preventative healthcare could significantly improve India's global ranking.

Comparing countries across the G20, we find that increasing spending on prevention by just 0.1 percentage points could unlock an additional 9% of spending every year by people aged 60 or over – and help everyone to work, care and volunteer for longer.<sup>6</sup>

## Countries that spend a larger proportion of their healthcare budget on prevention, including life-course immunisation, have a higher Index ranking

Figure 2: Spending on curative and preventative healthcare across the Index (ppp\$)



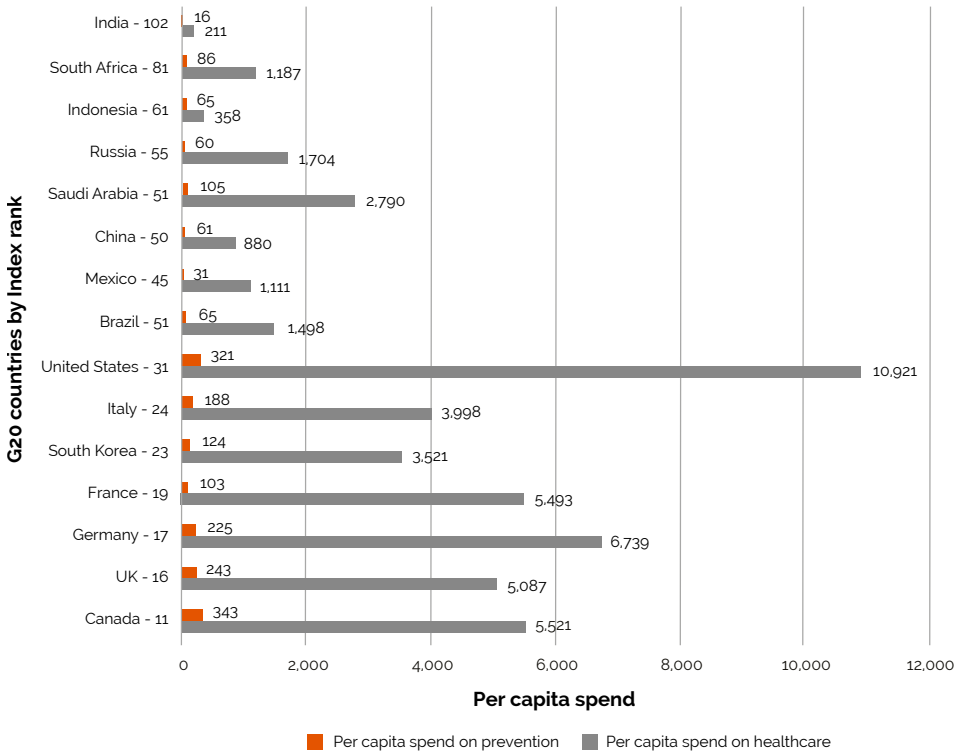
Currently, India spends only \$211 per capita on healthcare and \$16 per capita on prevention,<sup>b</sup> which is the smallest amount in the G20. It has not seen any significant increase recently – in fact, these figures have been falling since 2016.<sup>7</sup>

Healthcare spending is made up of a range of different types of spending, not just preventative and curative care. It can include private spending on over-the-counter drugs, insurance products, research and development, capital investment, and healthcare administration. India's overall healthcare spending amounts to only a fiftieth of spend in the US, while its prevention spending is a twentieth of Canada's. For further context, Indonesia's healthcare spend is \$358 and Mexico's prevention spend is \$31.

The G20 countries that spend the most on healthcare per capita are the US (\$10,853), Germany (\$6,418) and Canada (\$5,223), while those that spend the most on prevention per capita are Canada (\$343) the US (\$321) and the UK (\$243).

<sup>b</sup>Data is available for 15 G20 countries excluding the EU and Argentina, Australia, Japan, and Turkey.

**Figure 3: G20 spending on healthcare versus spending on prevention (ppp\$)**

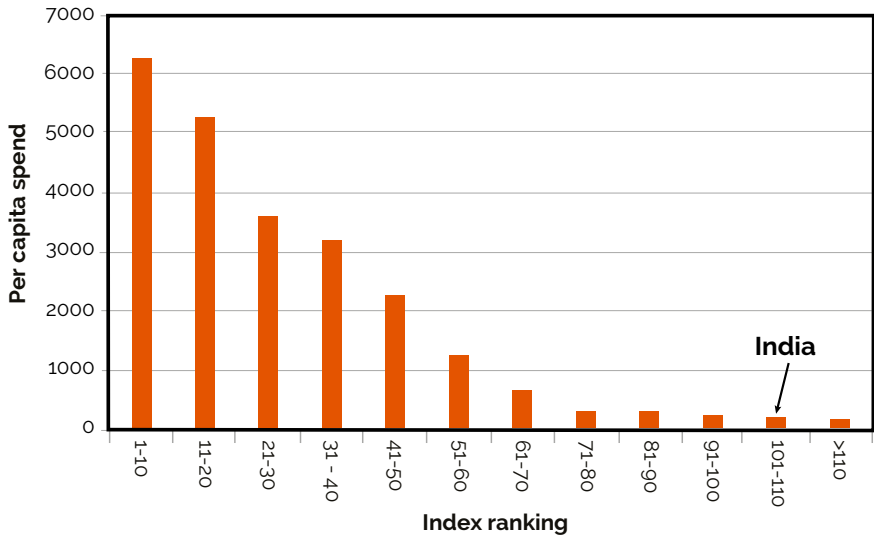


We recognise that the amount spent on healthcare is only part of the solution to support longevity, but it's a starting point.



## Countries which spend the most on healthcare have higher Index rankings

Figure 4: Per capita spend (ppp\$) v Index ranking



## 2. Tackling inequities

**Our Index ranks India as 79<sup>th</sup> of 121 for life span and 83<sup>rd</sup> for health span.**

Life span is defined as the number of years an individual can expect to live. India's life span is 70.8 years.

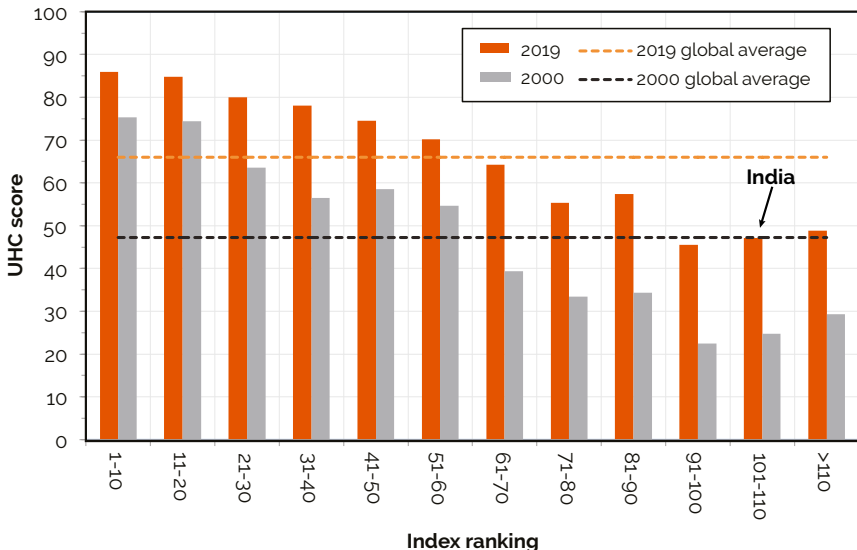
Health span is defined as the number of years an individual can expect to live in good health. India's health span is 60.3 years.

Universal health coverage (UHC) involves everyone having access to the full range of quality healthcare services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship. It covers the full continuum of essential healthcare services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care.

The number of citizens covered by India's UHC (known as its 'UHC score') has more than doubled between 2000 and 2019, demonstrating significant improvements in access to healthcare.<sup>8</sup>

### Countries that invest in Universal Health Coverage perform better on the Index

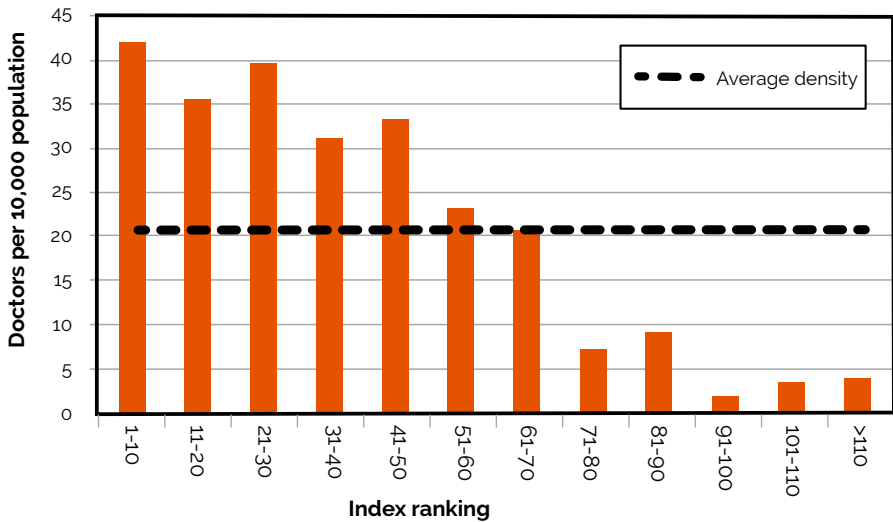
**Figure 5: UHC score v Index ranking**



However, India still struggles to provide access to doctors (generalists and specialist medical practitioners<sup>9</sup>). G20 countries with the highest Index rankings, such as Australia, Canada, the UK, Germany, Japan and France, have between 35 to 40 doctors per 10,000 population. In 2020, India averaged only 7 per 10,000 population.

**On average, countries with rankings in the bottom half of the Index, have four times fewer doctors than those ranked in the top half**

**Figure 6: Doctors per 10,000 population v Index ranking**



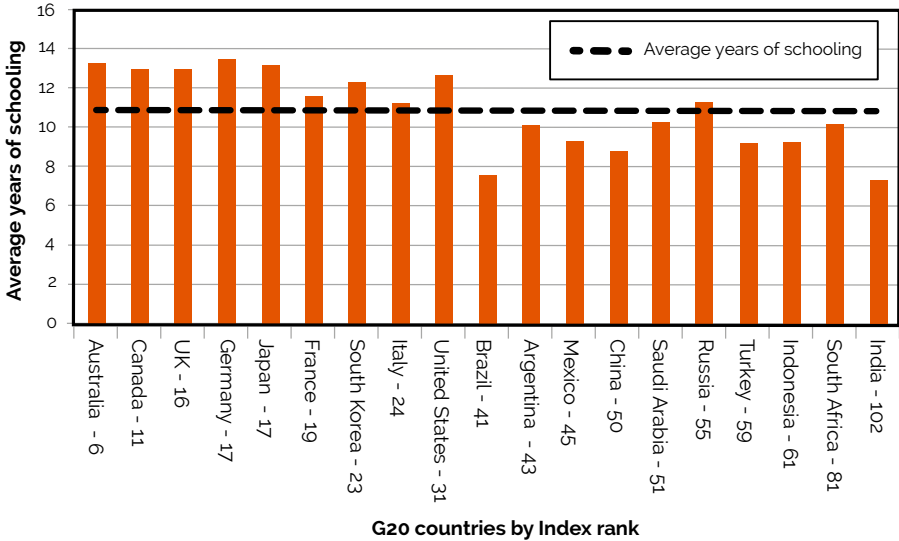
There are significant differences in health outcomes across the country. Kerala which has high figures for life span and health span, and has long been an outlier for both, has one of India's highest per capita government health spends. It has overhauled its health and care system to better meet the needs of older people. Such an approach could work well across the entire country<sup>10</sup>

Tackling health inequities also requires addressing the wider social determinants of health. In India, health outcomes are strongly influenced by socio-economic factors: in particular, education.

Across the G20, we find a strong relationship between Index ranking and investment in education. Based on 2020 figures,<sup>11</sup> India currently holds the lowest position for time spent in school before the age of 15, with an average of 7.29 years, compared to the G20 average of 11.5 years. However,

India has seen significant improvement over the last two decades, with an increase of 2.1 years. It's shown the third highest improvement over this period, behind only Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

**Figure 7: Average years of schooling across the G20 v Index ranking**



*Note: Data is taken retroactively from members of the population aged 15 and over.*

### 3. Investment in its workforce

**Our Index ranks India as 98<sup>th</sup> of 121 for work span and 79<sup>th</sup> for income.**

Work span is defined as the expected number of economically active years between the ages of 15 and 65. India's work span is 24.7 years.

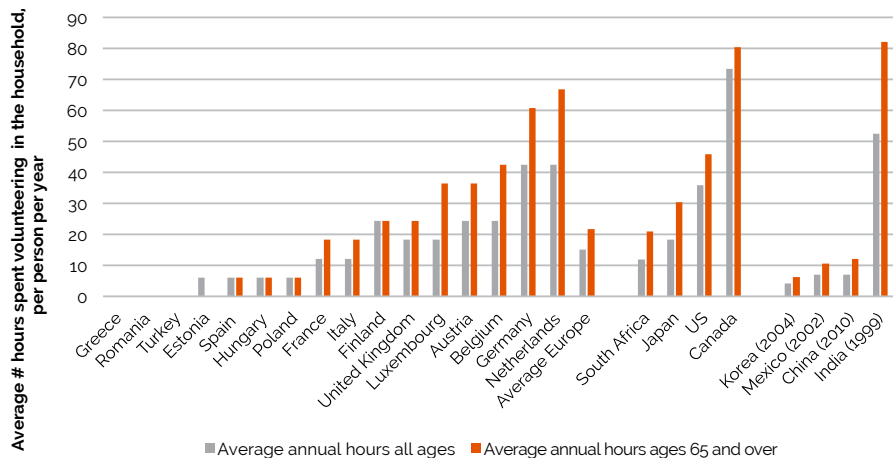
For the purposes of the Index, income is defined as GDP per capita, using purchasing power parity; India's income currently stands at \$7,000.

India's growing economic power mustn't be overlooked. Last year, it overtook the UK as the world's fifth largest economy - it's on track to become the third largest economy in the world by 2030, behind only the US and China.<sup>12</sup>

With more than half (51%) of India's people aged 50 to 69 in employment in 2018, investment in its older population could help further unlock this cohort's economic potential, enabling them to work for longer.

India's older population already adds significant value to their communities by undertaking unpaid contributions, such as volunteering, informal caregiving and looking after grandchildren. Those aged 65 and over spent more hours volunteering than those in other G20 countries. This cohort also spends an average of 30 more hours volunteering than people of other ages.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 8: Average hours spent volunteering per year in G20 countries, by age**



**Note: All figures are for 2010, unless specified.**

Investing in the health of older people could therefore bring significant benefits to both the formal and informal economy.

The rise in the proportion of working-age people within India's population could be key to future-proofing the country against longevity, by improving work span and income. Investing in preventative healthcare throughout people's lives can help ensure longer and healthier lives for future older citizens.

Our research also finds that income, happiness and environmental performance are all linked, suggesting that improvements any of these three factors could improve them all.

## What happens next

India's theme for its G20 presidency is *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (One Earth, One Family, One Future). With this theme, India aims to build consensus on a wide range of global challenges across the G20. These include global health.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, India has recognised the need to consolidate efforts made to strengthen global healthcare systems during the G20 presidencies of both Italy and Indonesia, to safeguard against future health emergencies.

India recognises the need for a united approach to global health, along with the need to create a system that prioritises universal, affordable, quality health services. As such, India is well placed to lead efforts to put healthy ageing and prevention on both the national and global policy agenda.

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## About the ILC

The International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) is the UK's specialist think tank on the impact of longevity on society. The ILC was established in 1997, as one of the founder members of the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance, an international network on longevity.

We have unrivalled expertise in demographic change, ageing and longevity. We use this expertise to highlight the impact of ageing on society, working with experts, policy makers and practitioners to provoke conversations and pioneer solutions for a society where everyone can thrive, regardless of age.



**International  
Longevity Centre UK**

The Foundary  
17 Oval Way  
London SE11 5RR  
Tel: +44 (0) 203 752 5794

**[www.ilcuk.org.uk](http://www.ilcuk.org.uk)**

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