

Aging Across The Zarathushti World

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THIS WHITEPAPER IS A CULMINATION OF THE WORK AND RESEARCH THAT WENT TOWARDS THE

JOYFUL CENTENARIAN SESSIONS

AT 12TH WORLD ZOROASTRIAN CONGRESS 2022 IN NEW YORK CITY



Whitepaper On

Aging Across The Zarathushti World

Authors: Nawaz Merchant and Dolly Dastoor

Introduction:

This white paper documents the learnings from our session: “Aging Across the Zarathushti World” at the 2022 World Zoroastrian Congress held in New York. For this session, the authors solicited Zoroastrian (Zarathushti) Associations in different countries about the condition of Z seniors and learnt about their needs as well as models that help improve Z senior’s quality of life. We found that many Z diasporas are well supported. Many of the survey respondents described aging Z immigrants cared for by their children and with some governmental social support or community services from Zarathushti and secular groups. However, our analysis surfaced a growing need among Z seniors in India.

As with most communities, Zarathushtis want to support their own family members. But what about those who we are not directly related to. Do we have an obligation to them? Do we agree that our global Zarathushti community is one? The authors believe we should support our aging co-religionists and offer suggestions based on the research for this session and subsequent visits to India.

Two accompanying videos presented at the session are available at:

<https://youtu.be/wDlvyfnQRiU>

<https://youtu.be/P32RjuDVMsk>

Background

1. Global aging population: what it means for us (Bomi Parakh and Linda Blanchard)

In America, each day about 10,000 people turn 65. Roughly one in six Canadians is over the age of 65. For the first time in the history of the world, people over 65 now outnumber kids under 5. By 2030, there will be more seniors in China and India combined than the entire population of the US. And, across the globe, the population of centenarians is, by far, the fastest growing population amongst all age groups. There is comfort and strength in being part of this large and rapidly growing community.

Significant and detailed information is now available on the medical, non-medical and psycho-social needs of seniors. Medical needs relate to the care of acute and chronic conditions. Non-medical needs are associated with deficits in activities of daily living (such as bathing, dressing, transportation, meal preparation and housekeeping). Psycho-social needs are higher-level needs that focus on such things as being productive, being able to contribute, and self-esteem. For any group of seniors, these medical and non-medical needs can now be pinpointed with sufficient accuracy. Analogous to a retirement financial plan, seniors armed with this information can now realistically estimate and therefore plan for these needs.

Seniors have a choice of settings and services to meet these needs. In North America for instance, the needs of seniors can generally be met in the home or in a range of senior housing settings (such as independent living, assisted living, or nursing home). Medical needs of seniors are mostly covered by Medicare (a US government national health insurance program covers about 80% of medical cost at insured-rates which are ¼ the price to uninsured patients). While non-medical needs are generally paid out of pocket, almost two-thirds of seniors rely exclusively on free care by family members and/or friends for their non-medical needs. In many countries, a wide range of services (like transportation, meals, laundry, cooking, shopping, housework, socialization, respite for caregivers and adult day care) are available to seniors for free or a nominal charge. In the US and Canada, several state and local welfare agencies can guide seniors through these range of choices and services. The goal of these social service agencies is to support the senior in the least restrictive setting and with the least outside intrusion/interference.

While most Zoroastrians prefer 'aging in place' at their own homes, many say they want to be around other Zoroastrians as they age. A 2016 survey in North America uncovered significant interest in Zoroastrian senior housing. Senior housing is an excellent opportunity for any Zoroastrian entrepreneur with an interest in helping seniors. It affords the Zoroastrian entrepreneur an excellent way to earn an income, build wealth, and employ family and friends. The senior housing industry is dominated by mom-and-pop operations with low barriers to entry in the USA. The explosive growth of the senior population is likely to fuel an increased demand for this service for many years to come. Zoroastrian associations and charities can support these entrepreneurs at startup by subsidizing some of the fixed real-estate costs of the facility in which Zoroastrian seniors are housed.

- By Bomi Parakh and Linda Blanchard

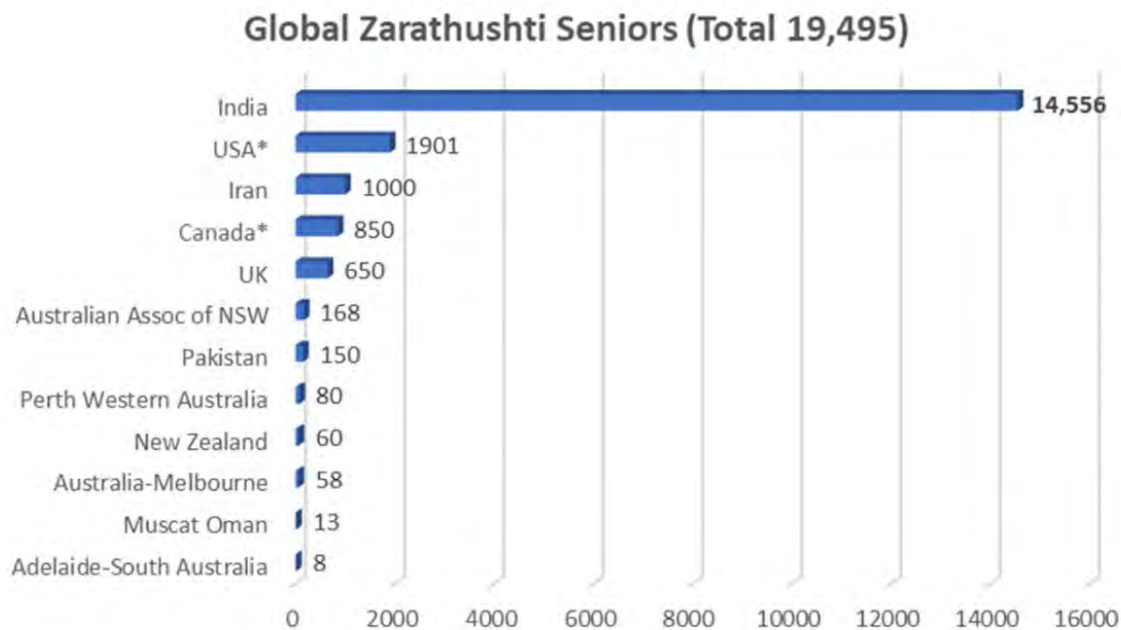
2. Challenges of aging in general --statistics and how Zoroastrians differ

As they age, Seniors rely on family members to perform many tasks, accompanying them for doctor's visits, online access for various accounts, banking, keeping medical records and appointments, driving them to the grocery store etc. Per Wikipedia, "The potential support ratio (PSR) is the number of people aged 15–64 per one older person aged 65 or older. This ratio describes the burden placed on the working population. ... As a population ages, the potential support ratio tends to fall. Between 1950 and 2009, the potential ratio declined from 12 to 9 potential workers per person aged 65 or over. In 2015, Japan has the lowest PSR in the world, at 1.8."

In North America and elsewhere in the diaspora there may be fewer Z seniors relative to the younger population (under 65). However, as described in the next section, in India, the PSR is likely to be well under 2. This means that less than two adults are available to care for a Z senior, many of whom live alone, or have no family nearby. This poses a significant risk of falls, injury and exploitation as Z seniors age.

3. Which areas have more Z seniors?

The largest group of Z seniors by far is in India, with about 14,500 seniors in 2022. The second largest group of Z seniors lives in the USA (estimated at about 1,900 in 2012, and likely about 2000 in 2022).



* from 2012 world demographic survey

Assessment

1. How are Z seniors doing in the 'new worlds' of Europe, Australia, NZ, and North America?

Z seniors in many communities are well supported by families and neighbors, with sufficient resources and medical attention. In many countries, Z associations have formed support groups for seniors and offer local activities. Many countries have public support programs for financial and health needs as well as socializing with others. However, the common themes from all centers was the loneliness of aging individuals and their wish to meet their younger family members more often.

Many associations have formed groups to support seniors. For example, Parinaz Gandhi quoted ZTFE president Malcolm Deboo in her article in the Parsiana Magazine, saying, "Volunteers of the ZTFE Senior Citizens Home and Caring for the Zoroastrian Community have been a lifeline for many of our senior citizens during Covid-19 with their regular phone calls and assistance. This has given so much assurance to everybody." ZTFE Senior Citizens Home Care Project was set up in 2018 "to arrange transportation for some isolated elders to the Zoroastrian Centre in Rayners Lane, for religious and social gatherings. Thereafter they launched phone calls, with a group of volunteers calling elders at least twice a week. Bonds began to form as the calls resulted in happy chats, trust built up and some volunteers extended hot meals, friendly visits and also assistance with shopping and/or lifts to important appointments."

Australia

Melbourne (Source: Dilshad, [Roda](#), [Maharukh](#))

- About 55-60 seniors age of 60+
- All comfortable in their own home with their own means of transport. A couple live in aged care
- Meet 2nd Sunday of each month for two hrs to socialize with their own age group

Adelaide (Source: [Mehernosh Amroliwala](#))

- A small community of 100 Zarathushtis with only 8 over 65 , and 2 over 90 years

Perth (Source: [Narius Irani](#))

- 380 [Zarthushtis](#) of which 25% are seniors
- spread across Perth, makes organising events for stimulating activities difficult.

New South Wales (Source: [Behmardi](#), [Parvin & Khodarahm](#), [Hira](#), [Hutokshi](#) & [Rumi](#), [Mehta](#), [Firozee Mody](#), [Yasmin](#))

- Meet and Greet group meets every 3rd Sunday of the month for organized activities. ([music](#), singing nostalgic songs, Bingo, religious talks, prayers, games, tea, catered lunch)



Countries with financial/govt support for seniors

NEW ZEALAND (Source: [Shanaz Desai](#) And [Tehmus Mistry](#))

- About 1500 Zarathushtis, with 80-100 aged 65+ (15% need assisted living).
- All comfortable well looked after by the Govt, very good quality of life, free medical services, free bus service and taxi vouchers, free laundry
- Issues: Reluctance to travel distances even if volunteers offered. They miss socializing with peers
- Seniors enjoy a monthly coffee group
- For 2 years in a row, New Zealand was voted “best country to live in” by seniors

UK (Source: [Perses Sethna](#))

- Of about 5000 Zarathushtis, 650 (range is 500-800) are 65+. An aging demographic.
- Seniors well placed and comfortable. Health Benefits are taken care of by the National Health Program
- Social support is taken care of by ZTFE with the telephone tree. Interfaith groups helps with transportation.

Canada

- Senior housing allowance for lower income seniors
- Medical care covered 80% through National Health Plan
- Z Associations planning senior housing
- Zs living in closer proximity have monthly/bimonthly meetings

2. What are the conditions of Z seniors in small population 'Old worlds' Pakistan, Oman and Iran?

Countries with smaller populations

PAKISTAN (Source: [Sunnu Golwala](#); [Gulbanu Bamji](#) and [Meher Cawaji](#), [Kermin Parakh](#), President, Banu Mandal)

- About 100-150 seniors need assisted living (Meals, snacks, entertainment and outings)
- Existing capacity is not fully used. Parsi General Infirmary: 16 of 25 are occupied, Arman House: 8 of 16 occupied
- Issues: Many want to live on their own, but suffer loneliness, emotional needs not met, no visits from children
- A solution: Adults can provide ‘community service’ to seniors and ‘bank’ the hours for when they need it.

IRAN (Source: [Mobed Mehraban Firouzgary](#))

- Most seniors are financially comfortable and live on their own but attend day centres for activities, picnics, activities at different festivals.
- There are 2 centres in Yazd: Polytechnic for ladies, 2 others in Yazd suburbs and in Kerman.
- Housing for seniors is licensed and subsidized by the Iranian Health Ministry
-

OMAN (Source: [Dr. Cashmera P. Bhaya](#))

- Of 196 Zarathushtis, there are 17 males and 11 females in 65 + age group.
- Nearly all professionals, very well settled. All live independently

3. What is the situation in India?

We estimated there is a current population of 14,500 Zarathushti seniors among ~47,000 Zarathushtis in India. This means about 32,500 are under the age of 60. Many of the 32K are children, therefore the care of these fifteen thousand seniors is likely to fall upon a few adults, many of whom are working and caring for young families. In addition, many Parsis do not have

children. Therefore, they may not have a direct family member to care for their needs and have to pay handsomely for servants' care (INR 15,000-25,000 per month.) Many elderly Parsis are unlikely to be able to afford this cost.

How did we arrive at these figures? Using the 2011 Indian census, we noted an 18% decline per decade in the Indian Z population. Extrapolating to 2022, the total population is estimated at 46,956, of which 31% (14,556 individuals) are over age 60.

**2011 Indian Census showed:
-18% change in count of Zarathushtis since 2001
31% of the Z population was over age 60
Estimated 2022 Z population at 46,956**

11 Years Ago	2011 census Zoroastrians age distribution		% total Zs		% of seniors
	(ALL AGE GROUPS)	69,601			
	60 to 69		14%	9,642	45%
	70 to 79		11%	7,964	37%
	80 & upwards		6%	3,982	18%
	Seniors		31%	21,588	

**Extrapolating from 2011 to 2022 we find
:Most of the world's Zoroastrian Seniors are in India
:About 14,550 Indian Zoroastrians are 60+**

Current	2022 Estimates					
	(ALL AGE GROUPS)	Decline	18%	46,956		
	60 to 69				45%	6,501
	70 to 79				37%	5,370
	80 & upwards				18%	2,685
	Z Seniors in India 60+	31%				14,556

India has experienced severe inflation over the last few decades, so that over the last 10 years, the value of savings has decreased by 78% (even if the senior has not spent a single dollar of those savings).

Of the present 14,556 seniors, we estimate that about 3,639 are experiencing serious financial hardship. Many may be residing with adult children many of whom are earning and bear the cost of their parent’s medical and other needs. However, about half may not have a family member nearby.

Indian Inflation particularly hurts seniors (if mandatory retirement age is 60)

Development of inflation rates for consumer goods in India



Original amount in Rupee:

Start year:

End year:

Value at the beginning of 2022: **1780.48 Rupee**

Price increase (= depreciation) in 10 years: **78.0%**

This corresponds to an average depreciation of 78.05 Rupee p.a..

Note: Inflation rates after 2021 are not yet available here. For the following years, the last available rate of 5.13% is used in this calculator.

Calculate

<https://www.worlddata.info/asia/india/>

We have no current estimates of income, so assume a normal distribution

25% of seniors are high income (good jobs, high savings)

50% are middle income (modest jobs, some savings)

25% low income (manual jobs, disabilities, high number of dependents)

2022 Estimates				High income	Mid income	Low income	Estimated Zs in need	
(ALL AGE GROUPS)	Decline	18%	46,956	25%	50%	25%		
60 to 69				45%	6,501	1625	3251	1625
70 to 79				37%	5,370	1342	2685	1342
80 & upwards				18%	2,685	671	1342	671
Z Seniors in India 60+	31%		14,556			3639	7278	3639

You may see:

- Increased medical appeals; requests for housing; need for senior care

Current # of Z Seniors in need

Projections in the next five years show the total population decline of 9% which take the senior population down to 13,246. Seniors who are presently middle income and aged 70+ will find their

assets shrink through inflation and consuming the savings. We estimate that in five years, about 6,977 Z seniors will face financial hardship.

In ten years, the total number of Z seniors is projected to shrink to 12,054. Over 9,000 individuals are likely to face financial hardship.

What about in 5 years?

The 70+ age group would consume their savings. Middle income individuals now find it difficult to pay for necessities, medical care, even avoid necessary expenses

2027 Estimates					High income	Mid income	Low income	Estimated Zs in need
(ALL AGE GROUPS)	Decline	9%						
60 to 69			45%	5,916	1479	2958	1479	
70 to 79			37%	4,887	1222	2443	1222	
80 & upwards			18%	2,443	611	1222	611	
Z Seniors in India 60+	31%			13,246	3312	6623	3312	6,977

You may see:

- Medical appeals; requests for housing; need for senior care
- Senior abuse, dependence on servants, exploitation of seniors

of Z Seniors in need in 2027

In Ten Years

**Most mid-income seniors may find their savings depleted
Those without children are most liable to be exploited
Unless community takes action, the plight of Z seniors is likely to be dismal**

2032 Estimates					High income	Mid income	Low income	Estimated Zs in need
(ALL AGE GROUPS)	Decline	9%						
60 to 69			45%	5,384	1346	2692	1346	
70 to 79			37%	4,447	1112	2223	1112	
80 & upwards			18%	2,223	556	1112	556	
Z Seniors in India 60+	31%			12,054	3014	6027	3014	9,041

You may see:

- Medical appeals; requests for housing; need for senior care
- Senior abuse, dependence on servants, exploitation of seniors
- Parsi seniors homeless, on streets, begging at Agiyaris

of Z Seniors in need In 2032

4. Changes in family model, challenges of living alone

A large proportion of Z seniors live alone. Some did not marry, others are widows/widowers. Some did not have children, and many have children living abroad or in other cities for work. We estimate that

about half have no younger family members living with them. This poses significant challenges for the community.

As of 2022, the children and descendants of Zarathushti women married to non-Parsi men are not counted as members of the community. The Parsiana Magazine statistics show that for decades, about half the marriages recorded are between a Parsi and a non-Parsi spouse. If 50% of Parsi women marry non-Parsis, then at least 25% of the total grandchildren are not counted as Zarathushtis. However, the authors have identified many instances where the non-Parsi spouse and children are the ones caring for the aging Z parents of the Parsi spouse. Therefore, there may be a few additional caregivers not counted within the dismal demographic statistics, caregivers that we Parsis have disdained to count.

Seniors living alone often enjoy low legacy rents or own their own flats. However, the cost of basic needs and servant-care can soon deplete their savings. Sanitoriums are a temporary refuge, but most are closed and not in use.

Those seniors living with family find themselves in cramped quarters, sharing living space with their children and grandchildren. In addition to the financial burden, this can pose an additional emotional strain on the family. One working couple often supports two children as well as up to four grandparents. Affordable senior housing can relieve this pressure on Z families.

Parsi charities in India generally support medical and emergency needs, but not housing needs. While the Bombay Parsi Panchayet is making efforts to release up vacant properties where the heirs are not in residence, these are ear-marked for younger couples so that they can expand their families. This means that Z seniors are on their own in this crucial matter. So, are there sufficient facilities for Senior Housing in India?

5. Facilities for Z seniors in need of housing and charity medical care

Mumbai once boasted **four parsi sanatoriums** (short stay locations where some individuals have stayed or moved between them for years): at Juhu, Bandra, Colaba and Kemp's Corner. Jasswalla sanatorium at Juhu and the Petit sanatorium at Kemp's Corner have been closed due to disrepair and high cost of maintenance. The Sorabji Byramji Sanatorium at Bandra sanitarium houses only a few people. The Colaba Sanitarium is also enmeshed in a legal dispute. Woefully inadequate as these are, they are unused as the Z population has shrunk, and these are still only temporary housing. Mehraban Firouzgary writes, "There was a Irani Dharamshala which stood at the corner of Hughes Road and Gamdevi on the Street leading to Nana Chowk. That decades-old establishment offered temporary housing to visitors from Iran, including visiting Mobeds." This facility is no longer operating. Also, the dilapidated women's wing of Cama Convalescent Home's was auctioned, and a single building now houses women and men whose stay is limited to convalescence from illness.

There are a few options for permanent senior housing:

WZO Trust Funds Senior Citizens Centre was established in 1998 in Navsari. It has grown to three connected buildings and is a model of care and modestly priced comfort. Of the capacity of 50,

presently it has 45 occupants. About half pay INR 6,000 per month, while the others are taken in gratis if unable to pay. Costs per resident per month are INR 13,000.

The Navsari Parsi Infirmary has 39 occupants (capacity is 61) and charges residents based on capacity to pay, while costs are about INR 12,500 per resident per month. It has recently advertised to make the Navsari community aware of the facility.

In Mumbai the **Pallonji Senior Home at Parsi General Hospital** offers three levels of cost/comfort for Z seniors. Ground floor dormitory residents live free of cost. First floor residents share a room between 3 individuals with a common bathroom outside for the low cost of INR 4,000 per month. The Second and Third floor offer private rooms and bathrooms, with the cost ranging from 27,000 to 70,000 per month.

One reason that prevents Z seniors from using this facility is the perception that if they are ill, they would be removed to the Parsi General Hospital and there is no guarantee that there would be a place for them to return to the Pallonji Senior Home. However we learned that “the family members or caretakers of the residents have to fill in a form and shift them to PGH or any other medical facility. After they are discharged, they have to necessarily move to their residence, stay there for two days and thereafter return to the Pallonji Seniors Home.” This at home stay may be problematic if there is no near relative or no space for the senior at the home. We suggest the trustees of the Pallonji Senior Home consider this, modify their policy and publicize their solutions.

The **Parsi ward at JJ Hospital** is managed through Mrs. Arnavaz Mistry. While the Trust considers residents staying free of cost, there is a strong effort to have residents pay something toward their stay. We watched a recent music program where the staff encouraged residents to “dance” in their chairs and clap their hands. Staff knew the residents well and were caring toward them.

Gamadia Nursing Home is an older establishment. Our visit to the location found 8 ladies in a room, with beds all next to each other. Some ladies were mobile. There were very few (common) bathrooms. This facility appeared rather dismal and in need of additional volunteers and activities. It needs significant renovations, lounge and game room, as well as activities coordinator to make this a lively, livable environment.

Each year Canadian volunteers (including Armaity Anandsagar) support the **Dosibai Parsi Old Age Home in Masina Hospital** with donations, and gifts of sudreh and nightgown to women, and sudreh-pajama to the male residents.

Our team visited the **Parakh Dharamshala** (Kharegat Colony, Malabar Hill) with BPP President Armaity Tirandaz. The building has separate men’s and women’s wings. Dormitory style residence is free of cost, while a small fee is charged for private rooms. (The cost per resident is INR 17,000 per month, borne by the BPP)

The men’s wing common bathrooms on four floors were recently remodeled with donor funding of Rs 35 lakh. The spotless facility is kept clean with a housekeeping staff that also cares for residents who need help with ADLs (Activities of daily living, like bathing). Yet the facility is at low occupancy and

about 50% capacity is unutilized. 56 beds out of a capacity of 100 are occupied. Reasons may be: Common bathroom is too far for seniors with prostate issues, preconceived notions among Z Seniors of poor living conditions in this facility. Though adding private bathrooms is expensive, the facility could be made more vibrant with activities, trips and classes, and through connections with youth groups, local colleges and other volunteer organizations. The BPP can better publicize this useful facility and seek donors to upgrade the facility.

In **Surat the Nariman Home and Infirmary** has a capacity for 35 male and 15 female residents. Occupancy: presently 22 men and 5 women are at the home. The residents live gratis, however the facility is in dire need of repair and upgraded plumbing (for example from common bathrooms away from the bedrooms, to private bathrooms). This institution reports that monthly costs are about INR 27,000 per resident (including medical care).

Implications of this analysis and next steps:



So what should we do NOW?

Solutions to support Z seniors could be privately funded or through Parsi trusts. In India, two new private ventures (only for Parsis) supplement the many secular senior homes which offer food, entertainment, social activity and companionship.

1. New commercial models for supportive housing: Living Tree in Navi Mumbai, and Healing Touch, Senior Citizens Home at Village Garade, Pune offer reasonably priced housing with airy and pleasant rooms, well appointed, elegant bathrooms and delicious parsi food.

New commercial models in India

Navi Mumbai- Upcoming facility
(Source: [Capt Percy Master](#), Owner)

- Navi Mumbai has 200 Z families,
- New Living-Touch 11 room facility with single and double rooms can accommodate **20 residents** (60 years and mobile,) [24 hour resident manager](#), security CCTV, doctor's visits
- Priced at about Rs 19,000 all inclusive.

Pune (Source: Khurshid and [Capt Adi Mistry](#) husband and wife team)

- A new **16-studio**, Healing Touch, Senior Citizens Home at Village [Garade](#), fully furnished. Nine seniors are ready to reside in the apartments.
- Scenic long walkway, huge trees along roads.
- Priced at (shared room) Rs 18,000-36,000 per month for long-term residents,

-
2. North American Z seniors have many options—but at a high price. This opens significant opportunities for small business entrepreneurship in USA/Canada

In North America, a range of senior housing exists from independent 55+ communities to assisted living to nursing home care. While large resort style residence costs at least \$4,000-5,000 per month, there are a range of lower-cost options, including aging in place with private-pay home-health visits. Memory-care for seniors with Alzheimer's or dementia is expensive, (~\$14,000 per month), and still may not provide daily baths or protection from other patients' germs. Many seniors are moving to active adult communities and continuous-care facilities which offer a range of care as the seniors age. For mobile adults, senior housing may be a profitable and comfortable small business. With relatively low barriers to entry in USA, a property can be rented or purchased and fitted to offer separate bedroom residence with shared common areas, standard meal plans conforming to dietary needs at reasonable cost.

3. Some Z associations in North America have considered senior housing projects in North America as a future objective

From **ZSBC in Vancouver**, we learned that "Attached and above the Darbe Mehr, we are planning to build additional square feet of accommodation. We are expecting that the City of Burnaby will allow us to build 20 Units: 16 Luxury Condos and 4 affordable Rental Units." ZSBC indicates that it is part of a later phase of their construction plan on the property. The property adjacent to the Dar-e-Mehr could include commercial space to be given on rent. This can help support senior homes which would be rented to Zs receiving the Canadian housing allowance for seniors in some circumstances.

ZAH Zoroastrian Association of Houston has assigned a 2-acre property for a future senior residence. No construction has begun on this property yet.

ZAGNY (Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York) uses property owned by the DMZT Dar E Mehr Zoroastrian Trust. A single family home adjacent to the present Dar-e-Mehr is rented out to a family. In a past AGM meeting Nawaz Merchant recalls a discussion to not sell this property as someday it may serve the need of Zoroastrian seniors. DMZT has no plans at present regarding the property.

Possible and Impossible solutions

Admin

- Parsi Trusts can combine for ease of administration and management
- Set up easy-to-use application online / hotline
- Set up database of Senior Services akin to Parsiana yellow pages

Funding

- Sale of properties in towns where there are no/few remaining Parsis; Sale of unused properties in disrepair
- Combine with donor funds from abroad

Repurpose

- Bring disused Agiyari fires to Udvada with respect (Aden-Lonavala model). Refurbish and repurpose older properties
- Provide loans for Parsi entrepreneurs to create senior housing

4. Suggestions for Parsi Trusts: We suggest that the administrative and regulatory burden upon Trusts can be decreased by combining operations. However local experts in Mumbai consider this impossible. Each trust is treated as “a private fiefdom”, so collaboration between them appears unlikely. There is no count of how many disused Z properties have fallen into disrepair, or occupied by squatters. At best these result in expensive and lengthy legal disputes. Undefined, they are abandoned to squatters, builders or taken over by local government. Is it not better to dispose of them and use the proceeds to aid Zarathushtis?

What about collaboration with overseas donors? Each year ZAGNY volunteers collect and remit \$30,000-\$100,000 to the Parsi General Hospital. Additional donations are sent to the Udvada temple and priests and rural Parsis continuing the lifelong work of ZAGNY founding member Eruch Munshi. Many Zarathushtis also support the Surat Orphanage, and an effort was made to provide computers to the children of Nassesalas serving the Mumbai Doongerwadi. Many other

donor efforts also channel significant Zoroastrian funds to the Parsi General Hospital and Navsari infirmary.

The Navsari WZOT Funds Senior Home is a model of partnership with Private Donors for the community's benefit. Clear and written plans with timetables, full transparency of expenses and diligent accounting are requirements for partnership with overseas donors.

However, older rigidities continue to oppose progressive ideas. For example, with the Parsi population dwindling in certain towns it is logical to bring the sacred Agiyari Atash fire to more populated areas. A recent effort to relocate the Atash of Baruch (85 Zs remain) to Navi Mumbai (450 Z residents) has been opposed due to the possibility of opening the Navi Mumbai Agiyari to non-Parsi (spouses). Similarly, a 22-million-dollar donation to the Parsi General Hospital from Hong Kong donors was lost when a Z lawyer and pair of "community activists" opposed the plan to build a general wing (open to the public) which could subsidize the free Parsi wing of the hospital. (see Dec. 7 2022, editorial in Parsiana Magazine for examples.)

The Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP) runs a shortfall of INR 10 crore per year (\$1,200,000). (Parsi General Hospital shortfall was INR 14 CR in the last financial year.) When asked why, BPP chairperson Armaity Tirandaz honestly shared that interest from BPP investments can no longer support BPP's community programs. She appealed to donors to come forward and support the BPP's efforts.

Donors believe that BPP has significant assets, yet any attempt to sell off disused properties is immediately opposed by a small set of die-hards. The BPP does not want to get entangled in expensive and long-running lawsuits. Thus, the BPP, the largest community body bears costs of programs as well as maintaining charity blocks and structures (where rents are nominal for decades) and is consuming its corpus each year.

5. Housing and services for Z seniors in India needs to grow

- The authors visited the presently disused and decrepit **Parsi Lying In Hospital** which is vacant for the last thirty years (the ground floor is occupied by Parsiana as office space). The Bombay Parsi Punchayet which owns the land of the property is planning to restore the building into a functioning specialty hospital (Possibly orthopedics or memory care are being considered, since there is presently no memory care unit for Parsis.) Given the aging demographics and the extreme burden of caring for patients with dementia, it is astonishing that there is **presently no facility for memory care** for Parsis. This is likely to become an acute need in future.
- Commercial ventures like **Good Fellows** (an initiative by Shantanu Naidu and sponsored by Ratan Tata) offer seniors a subscription model (Rs 5000/month) to avail of a young companion for walks, doctor visits, help with technology or just conversation. Youth

companions are trained and monitored to ensure high quality interactions and positive relationships.

- During a meeting at WZOT with Dinshaw Tamboli, Freyaz Shroff, Homiyar Madon and Farzana Mojjani surfaced the need for a **database of Bhonavala (daily food service) providers by area** in Mumbai and surrounding areas. This could be publicized in agiyaris (fire temples) so seniors can avail of the local services, which would then also encourage home-based cooking businesses. The Parsiana magazine had published a ‘Yellow pages’ pamphlet in 2010, which could be put online and republished. With donor support, this can be made broadly available free of cost in local fire temples, which will help Z seniors in India to find services they need.

Conclusion:

A community is judged by how it cares for its vulnerable populations. American writer and novelist Pearl Buck (1892-1973), best known for her novel, *The Good Earth* (Pulitzer Prize 1932), and recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature wrote: “Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members.”

There is presently some modest capacity in Mumbai (Parakh Dharamshala can take 44 more Z seniors), Navsari infirmary (space for 22 more Zs) and Surat (where the facility urgently needs updating). However, this is unlikely to meet the needs of Z seniors in the coming years. Additionally volunteer organizations need to collaborate to provide support for Aging in Place so that seniors can remain in the areas where they have long-standing relationships.

Our demographic trend is unlikely to change. The growth in our religious community is likely to continue in the diaspora, while the Indian Z population declines. Yet how the global Zarathushti community addresses the challenges of a large aging cohort will determine how we are judged by history. Did we abandon our seniors and leave them to struggle alone? Or did we mobilize our immense creativity and partnership to care for them to make their sunset years safe and joyful.

We thank the individuals and volunteers from each Association that responded to our survey: Their detailed responses on the lifestyles and situation of Zarathushtis are included in the appendix. Jennifer Bugli and Aurash Aidun created two [delightful 3-minute videos](#) on The Global Z community and Indian Z Seniors, which were shown at the Congress. Bomi Parakh and Linda Blanchard contributed their experience and partnership, for which we are immensely grateful. Thanks also to Parsiana Magazine Chief Editor Jehangir Patel for his review and to Shanaz Desai for coordinating the responses from Australia. We thank the Congress committee for the opportunity to bring this important issue to light.

White paper authors



Nawaz Merchant

- A past VP at ZAGNY with a Masters degree in Health Policy 2015,
- Pharmaceutical Commercial operations executive for 20+ years
- Completed first ever Zarathushti Senior Needs assessment in North America (with Dolly) in 2017; Volunteers with ZAGNY as Coordinator of senior program
- Now an author, teaches creative writing at Rutgers Univ, [Osher Institute](#); Board member at Mystery Writers of America and Shine and Inspire, a local non-profit.



Dolly Dastoor

- A past-president of FEZANA, with a doctorate in Clinical Psychology.
- Retired as Clinical Administrative Chief of the Program in Dementia with Psychiatric Co-morbidity (Douglas Hospital). Ran memory care unit
- Chair of the Education Committee of the McGill University Research Centre in Studies in Aging
- On the faculty of Psychiatry at McGill University.
- Current editor-in chief of the FEZANA JOURNAL
- Chair of the FEZANA Scholarship Program.

APPENDIX: Global responses to questions about Aging

1. [AUSTRALIA: Melbourne](#)
2. [ADELAIDE: SOUTH AUSTRALIA](#)
3. [SYDNEY: Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW](#)
4. [PERTH: Western Australia](#)
5. [NEW ZEALAND: Tehmus Mistry](#)
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8. [PAKISTAN: Sunnu Golwalla](#)
9. [UK: Perses Sethna](#)
10. [Canada \(Vancouver\): Zav Patel](#)

AUSTRALIA—Melbourne

The Zoroastrian Seniors Group in Melbourne was formed in July 2012. The first meeting attracted a lot of interest and from then on has gained momentum. It gave an opportunity of socializing within one's own age group and due to its success these meetings are held on a regular basis.

The seniors meet on the second Sunday of every month at a Council run facility in Glen Waverley, Melbourne. The meeting is held for two hours from 11am to 1pm. Seniors show off their culinary skills by bringing a plate to share. Tea, coffee, biscuits are served and birthdays celebrated. These meetings have created a great sense of belonging within the age group. Sharing experiences of travel and family news – be it a wedding or achievements of their children or births of the grandchildren is of great interest to everyone. News and views from far and wide are also shared. The day brings about a sense of camaraderie and togetherness. A voluntary gold coin donation (as agreed by the seniors) is made and the proceeds go towards organizing outings or providing lunches. All Zoroastrian seniors and their Zoroastrian/non-Zoroastrian spouses (60years and over) are very welcome at these get togethers. At times visiting family members also join in.

The Zoroastrian Association of Victoria sets aside a yearly funding for the benefit of the Seniors. This year the Multicultural Seniors Support Programme of the Victorian Government sanctioned funds towards the wellbeing of our Seniors.

There are approximately 55-60 seniors living in Melbourne and people over the age of 60 are classified as seniors. The majority are comfortable and live in their own homes and have their own means of transport. Some still hold part time/full time jobs. A few live with family and a couple of them are in aged care. Pensioners are provided health and social benefits from the government.

The Seniors look forward to the monthly meetings with great enthusiasm and bring with them their happy and smiling personalities and this goes a long way in interacting with others.

ZAV Seniors' Committee Delshad, Roda, Maharukh

ADELAIDE—SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Thank you for reaching out and enquiring about our seniors in South Australia.

Adelaide is the capital of South Australia and is home to most of the Zoroastrians in the state. The Adelaide Zoroastrian community is predominately young in age with approximately 100 individuals, out of which only 8 are over the age of 65 (2 over 90).

To my knowledge, the first Zoroastrian migrant family came in the 1970's. In the late 1990's, the total Zoroastrian community grew to approximately 40 individuals. Migration increased post 2010 when the state commenced sponsoring migrants.

Adelaide's quiet and simple lifestyle is often a drawing point for many migrants and young families. This has led to an increase in our loving and supportive Zoroastrian community in South Australia. Although we may not have many, our seniors are self-sufficient, independent and are surrounded by families and loved ones.

Due to the small size of our Zoroastrian community, we currently do not have an association. However, the size of our community has enabled close friendships and bonds to be formed over the years. This has allowed families to meet regularly for all types of events from family check-ins to large gatherings for navrose and new year celebrations.

Thanks and Regards Mehernosh Amroliwala

Australian Zoroastrian Association of NSW

Rumi and Huti Hira

On 17 June 2007, the first of many seniors' monthly get-togethers at our Darbe Mehr was initiated through the benevolence and largesse of our late Akhtar Ostowari, respected and stalwart founder member and Trustee. This project was initiated in memory of her late husband Nawzar Ostowari, major donor and one of the early settlers in Australia. Akhtar's aim and vision was to include our community seniors who were geographically spread far and wide in Sydney, to participate in a structured "meet and greet", and to give them an enjoyable day with their Zoroastrian friends.

Before the existence of the AZA Seniors monthly "meet and greet", Mithi Daver our indomitable organizer would religiously organize twice a year picnics, an event that many seniors would look forward to.

The Zoroastrian Community, by holding this Seniors Day every month, brings together our Seniors (65 years and over) thus appreciating their continuous contribution to the community over the years.

The Seniors' Committee is grateful to the AZA community for the generous monthly donations. Through this contribution, the community venerates the Seniors and acknowledges that all culture and customs will be handed down through them to the younger generations. We acknowledge the fulsome praise and loving gratitude of our seniors.

Over the years, a few of the Seniors' Days have been generously sponsored by our benevolent community members by donating in cash, kind or volunteering their efforts.

The Seniors' meet is held monthly on the third Sunday at the AZA Community Hall at 196 Annangrove Road, Annangrove.

All seniors are welcomed and encouraged to attend on that day at a nominal contribution. A group of dedicated volunteers carefully attend to the catering, and work out a program for the day. The day starts

at 11:00am. There is music and singing some of the nostalgic songs of the old forgotten bygone days, Bingo, Religious talks, prayers, games and delightful morning tea, deliciously catered lunch, and the day ends at 3:00pm culminating with afternoon tea. Food forms the most important part of the agenda for the day ... Though most importantly they like to catch up and enjoy the company of their Zoroastrian friends and indulge in the odd gossip.

There is something for everyone, and the volunteers put in a great deal of effort to ensure that our seniors have an enjoyable day.

There were a high proportion of members over 65 – perhaps a hundred. The 2016 census showed 1350 zarathustis, which was an increase of 21% over 2011. We don't yet have the results of the 2021 census. I would estimate 1400-1500, given the lack of migration the last 2 years.

FROM MAGS group (Met and Greet sessions)

The facilities for Aged Care for our Senior members are varied and several in this country ie Private and Public.

Aged care provides support to older people to help them with everyday living and other needs. Government-funded aged care services include in-home care (care in your home), residential care in aged care (nursing) homes, and short-term care such as respite care. If you're not eligible, you can choose to access privately funded services, but you will need to pay the full cost yourself."

They range in different prices as some may charge the Seniors of the country only the Government Pension they receive, some Seniors who are not citizens maybe charged privately and some Seniors may be charged over and above the rate of their Pensions, depending on their financial situations.

The Australian Zoroastrian Association have no part in servicing these facilities, it is up to the individuals and their family members to organize Aged Care for our Seniors who may not be able to reside at home by themselves or who are not being able to be taken care of by their family members.

Behmardi, Parvin & Khodarahm

Hira, Hutokshi & Rumi

Mehta, Firozee

Mody, Yasmin, Nadish





PERTH—Western Australia

“Perth is the largest city of Western Australia and its history only dates back to the early 1830’s when the city became home to gold prospectors during the gold rush of Western Australia. Infact, it was around the mid-18th century that many public works were completed giving Perth a “City” status. Being the younger cousin of Sydney and Melbourne, Perth was also late in attracting migrants from Asia and Europe.

Whilst large scale migration started in the 1920’s, it wasn’t until 1956 that Perth attracted its first Parsi family - Late Jijibhoy Pestonji Guzder (affectionately known as "Jiju") from Mumbai. Since then, Perth has been home to several Zoroastrians from the sub-continent or migration from the eastern states and across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand. Western Australia houses large mineral, oil & gas reserves and job prospects within the resources sector was the primary reason early Zoroastrian settlers migrated to Perth. Over time as other industries picked momentum; Perth boasted a calm, serene and relaxed lifestyle to its cousin cities in the East.

The Zoroastrian Association of Western Australia (ZAWA) was formed in the 1997. This was the impetus that set the scene - several Zoroastrian professionals & students like myself learnt of an association that could connect them to Zoroastrians as needed and thus our community started taking shape.

Today Perth is home to approximately 13% of Ausi Zarathushtis which amount to approx. 380 individuals. Amongst us, roughly 25% would be seniors and a further 25% would be between the 50-65 age bracket.

Perth is blessed to offer good recreational facilities for seniors. Personal transport is the more convenient mode of transport and most of our seniors have fortunately retained their licenses (and independence) to be able to drive down to their local cafes for a coffee and gup-shup with their neighbourhood Parsis.

Our seniors who largely enjoy good health are supported by the welfare-state government if required, however most are surrounded by their families, have mortgage-free homes and financially secure. We even find several of our cricket-crazy seniors joining us as players/spectators and our seasonal games.

Undoubtedly, there is an obvious need for ZAWA to get involved in organising more events that address this growing demographic. Our seniors are spread across the length & breadth of Perth and thus organising periodic events that bring our seniors together for a mind stimulating and/or relaxing get-together would be welcomed by many.

Over the years ZAWA has organised seniors’ events, and next year being its 25th anniversary, we are look at recurring options that works to the convenience of our happy retirees. Ushta Te.”

Please ask if you have any queries. Thank you for your time. Have a nice weekend.

Kind regards,



Narius Irani

Secretary; 2020-2022
Zoroastrian Association of WA



NEW ZEALAND: Tehmus Mistry

Over the years, most Zoroastrian migrants to New Zealand were professionals in their twenties and thirties looking for greener pastures for themselves and their young families. However, a few Zoroastrians in their 50s came between 1988 and 1994 as business migrants. Since 2005, as New Zealand actively promoted international students to attend education institutions, young people in their early twenties, came to get a qualification that provided them a steppingstone to get a New Zealand residency visa.

The young families mainly migrated from India and some of these families on receiving their permanent residency/citizenship looked to get their parents from India to settle here under New Zealand's generous family reunion/dependency visa.

Today the Zoroastrian population in New Zealand is around 1,500. In New Zealand, the retirement age is 65 and we usually classify people over 65 as seniors. We estimate that in New Zealand there would be around 50 to 70 seniors, who permanently reside in New Zealand. Some seniors having gained permanent residency/citizenship spend some time overseas and in New Zealand. Then we have the parents who come at regular intervals to spend a few months in New Zealand. So, we estimate that at most times we would have about 80 to 100 seniors residing in New Zealand.

All these seniors live comfortable lives, with about 60% of the seniors living with their families, about 25% live in their independent residences with the remaining 15% in assisted living facilities.

Most of our seniors are relatively healthy and are well looked after by family and receive good support from the New Zealand government for health and other social services.

Auckland being a city which is spread out, and public transport is not the best and convenient. So, one needs a car to get around. Many Zoroastrians do not necessarily live close in proximity, like in India in baughs and colonies; so, the main issue Zoroastrian seniors have is socializing with friends of their own age. Our seniors do socialize, but it often lands up with the friends of their children.

In 2009, the Zarathushtrian Association of New Zealand initiated a seniors monthly coffee group where seniors meet for about two hours. We serve tea, coffee, and some snacks; and about 3 to 4 times a year they have a longer session where lunch is served. These sessions allow Zoroastrian seniors to enjoy the companionship with fellow Zoroastrians in their own age group, socialize with friends, and have an enjoyable time. At these sessions not only do the seniors have the opportunity to have a face-to-face conversations, but also, enjoy a social time playing games like housie (Bingo), sing songs and other fun activities. At these events we also celebrate our seniors' birthdays.

The New Zealand government does a good job looking after Senior citizens. They provide free medical services and financial support to help seniors maintain a good quality of life. Other than medical services being free, the focus of government services offered is to help the senior person to stay safely in their home for as long as they can and assist to:

- maintain the persons independence and quality of life
- stay in their home or in a home with family for as long as feasible
- help the person participate in the community.

Services offered may include:

- Free public bus service, free taxi vouchers to visit doctors and some community activities, and subsidised private transportation services like “driving Miss Daisy”.
- A qualified person comes over to provide personal care (e.g., getting out of bed, showering, dressing, medication management, etc.)
- A person comes over to provide personal household support (e.g., cleaning, meal preparation, etc.)
- Care support to help for the person who lives with the senior and/or looks after them. This may be in the form of some monetary support or respite care.
- equipment to help with safety at home. (walkers/wheelchairs, a suitable bed, providing funding to make toilet, shower easily accessible/suitable, etc.)
- Community Services card and a Seniors Gold card that gives discounts at some retailers, activities, utilities, accommodation, restaurants, etc.

The government also provides financial assistance to few charitable organisations like meals on wheels that provide fee meals delivered to seniors at their homes.

If the senior person is living with a family member, then the family members have an option to leave the person at senior daycare centers while they are at work. If the senior person is living at home by themselves or with family, they are eligible for someone to come in 1 to 2 times a week to assist in keeping the house clean. Respite care is also available to family members who are caregivers so that the senior person can spend a week to about four weeks at a residential care facility, to lessen the fulltime care obligation on the caregivers.

If the situation is that the person can no longer live at home by themselves or with caregivers, then there are free assisted living facilities available for senior citizens to live permanently in.

There are also few charitable organisations that receive government support or indirect government support (e.g., via lottery commission, etc.) who provide social services (yoga classes, hobby groups, ethnicity-based get-togethers groups, etc.) for seniors

A study done in 2020 of the best countries for old people to live in ranked New Zealand in the top 10 countries in the world. More can always be done but based on what New Zealand government currently

offers we are thankful, grateful and count our blessings for making New Zealand our new home. Our seniors are blessed to live in this wonderful country with family and friends.



IRAN (Senior Behdins of Iran): Mobed Firozgary

Specific to the Iranian elderly Behdins is the irony that, for centuries nonstop, their ancestors had been quarantined into Refugee Camp like colonies.

Treated, just like the other Iranian Religious Minorities, as Infidels and Untouchables; they were, almost, barred from the existing countrywide public supplies and amenities including any kind of employments.

In the long run such restrictions have proved to be “Blessings in disguise”.

They learnt and practiced to be self sufficient. Hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder the womenfolk - young and old - joined the Community men and boys in agriculture / animal husbandry, arts and crafts, business and trades besides all that goes into maintaining a united, self reliant, devoted, and a cultured prosperous Community. Trading agents were in partnership with other Minority Camps and with their Immigrant community counterparts, abroad.

Land, barren and sandy, was plenty. Their ingenuity helped in digging underground water ducts in order to fetch water from snow melting mountain reservoirs and, thus, defy the limited overland water allowed and interfered to trickle into the Camps.

On the whole they evolved a healthy and prosperous Cooperative system of large area crowded family houses with attached agricultural land and cottage industries.

The post era of Manekji Limji Hatarya and associated, outside, Relief Fund providers cracked open the camp gates, while the post World War II revolutionary progresses drowned the Camp walls and let out a Community of industrious, hardworking, disciplined, honest and progressive minded persons.

Out into the open world they set up lucrative businesses, were anxiously employed and absorbed into educational institutes.

The present Senior Iranian Behdins have evolved from the above listed Cultural Heritage. As gathered from popular beliefs, barring a few tens of the entire population, who have been unlucky one way or the other and depend entirely on Relief funds, All the worldwide Iranian Middle Aged (55 to 70 years old) and Seniors (Over 70) live on their own earnings by trade or retirement pensions. Majority have invariably invested in land/ property as well as inherited. These could prove added temptation for already willing family members to arrange for about the best care and treatment for their elders, living with them or unwilling to stay with them in their apartment houses, inland or abroad, and prefer to hold on to their roots.

As the matter stand today, able bodied seniors of Yazd have the choice to be driven to and fro Daily elderly Care Centres. Early mornings in time for breakfast, medical check up, exercise and minor therapies', entertainments and indoor games, lunch rest and back home before sunset. One in city centre, the famous Pouruchista 2 – founded as a Polytechnic centre for ladies – and two others in Yazd suburbs. Kerman has similar facilities as well. These are free of charge and charity based centres.

Fully fledged Senior Behdin Homes licensed, meeting standards and partly compensated by the Iranian Health Ministry are operating in Tehran Yazd and Kerman. The Yazd one is being replaced, further updated, to a location facing the Yazd Atash Behram. All these Centres are charge able unless Charity is sought. Quite a few seniors are housed in outside Community resort like Homes. Quite expensive places. Have rich relatives or resources!!

The writer is turning 88 and lives alone. About all close family live abroad. Manages the housework, without outside help, besides catering to a multitude of Community commitments, writing a lot – in spite of poor eyesight and age related problems like low blood pressure etc. All honorary, while much enjoyed. Half of his monthly retirement Pension goes into charities. May Ahura Mazda be pleased with those attempts. Amen.

Photos below of Tehran Old age Home

Our courtesy goes to our Esteemed MP Dr. Esfandiyar Ekhtiyary and his assistant Mr. Rashid Shohrat for the photos of Tehran and Yazd





Residents of Old Age Home in Yazd during Mehregan Festival

Oman: Dr. Cashmera P. Bhaya, Sociologist

I would like to give you a brief description of the senior citizens living in the city of Muscat in the Sultanate of Oman. I too am based in Muscat with my family since the past 36 years.

There are a total of 196 persons in Oman as of November, 2020. There are Zoroastrians also residing in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the Middle-East.

The data below has been collated by me on January 10, 2022, by personally interviewing on phone, the Senior Zoroastrians residing in Muscat. All adults aged 65 and over were covered in the survey.

A total of 13 adults were interviewed, of which 11 were males and 2 were females. There are 2 other couples in the age group of 65 and over but were not available at the time of interview. If we include these 4, the total will be 17 Senior Zoroastrians.

The age-groups of these 13 adults were:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
1. 65	1	1
2. 67	2	1
3. 68	2	-
4. 69	1	-
5. 70	1	-
6. 71	3	-
7. 77	1	-
<u>Total</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>

Thus, 8 adults were in the age-group from 65 years to 69 years and 5 were in the age-group from 70 to 77 years. Interestingly, of the 13 Senior Zoroastrians, only 2 females were in the Senior category. Other 11 males had spouses who were much younger than them and were below 65 years of age. Of these 13 adults who were interviewed, 12 were married to Zoroastrian spouses, while one Zoroastrian male was married to a non-Parsi female and was divorced. None of the 13 adults, were widows or widowers and it was their first marriage.

As for their education and occupation, 6 males were chartered accountants. Of the 11 males, four were in service, one was a Non-Executive Director, one was an Advisor to the Chairman of a company, one was an investor after retirement from service, one had his own consultancy after retirement, two were completely retired and one was recently retired and about to leave the country. The 2 females were home-makers.

All the Senior Zoroastrians in Muscat are very well-settled, living in spacious, comfortable houses, mostly rented, are financially sound, happily married, enjoying good health and do not have any cause of concern. Just one male stated that he was suffering from prostate cancer and had both knee replacements. Of the seven couples, six couples were staying alone as their grown-up children were settled in different parts of the world. Only one couple was staying with their adult son. However, these

couples said though they missed their children, they were a happy lot as they had a circle of good friends. Also, that, they were in constant touch with their children – the children visited them or they visited their children residing outside Oman. All the Seniors were mobile and had their own cars and did not have any transport problem. This is another reason they did not feel lonely as they are socially active and mobile and did not have to depend on others for taking them around.

How do these Senior Zoroastrians stay in the country?

While most of the retired Zoroastrian families have returned to their country of origin like India and Pakistan, some have stayed back in the country after retirement. This is because expatriates are granted residency visas if they buy property in designated zones or if they invest in a company or government bonds. In general, the Senior Zoroastrians in Muscat are leading a peaceful and happy life.



Community New Year get-together in Muscat



Farewell to a couple leaving Muscat after 50 years



The Seniors called on the stage to address the crowd at the farewell



Community picnic at a private farm, Muscat



The fun still goes on after the picnic on the way back home, Muscat

INDIA: Dinshaw Tamboly

Q1. Can you estimate how large is the elderly population of Zarathushtis in India?

A1. The profile below tells its own story.

PARSEES & DEMOGRAPHY**CENSUS 2011
Demographic Profile of Parsis****Census**

2001: 69,601

2011: 57,264

Diff: 12,337 (-18%)

2011 Break up

Total	57,264	100%
Maharashtra	44854	78.3%
Gujarat	9,727	17.0%
Rest of India	2,683	4.7%

Age wise distribution of Parsee population – All India.

Age Group	Total Population	Percentage
0 to 9	5068	7.28%
10 to 19	7339	10.54%
20 to 29	8010	11.51%
30 to 39	8165	11.73%
40 to 49	9443	13.57%
50 to 59	9988	14.35%
60 to 69	9642	13.85%
70 to 79	7964	11.45%
80 & upwards	3982	5.72%
TOTAL	69,601	100%

Parsee population as per census: 1901 to 2011

Year	All India	Maharashta	Mumbai
1901	94,910	58,093 – 61.2%	46,231 – 48.7%
1911	100,096	63,860 – 63.8%	50,931 – 50.9%
1921	101,778	65,493 – 64.3%	52,234 – 51.3%
1931	109,752	71,627 – 65.3%	57,765 – 52.6%
1941	114,890	70,139 – 61.1%	59,813 – 52.1%
1951	111,791	79,606 – 71.2%	68,660 – 61.4%
1961	100,772	77,542 – 76.9%	70,065 – 69.5%
1971	91,378	72,266 – 79.1%	64,667 – 70.8%
1981	71,630	56,886 – 79.4%	50,053 – 69.9%
1991	76,382	60,501 – 79.2%	53,794 – 70.4%
2001	69,601	54,739 – 78.6%	46,557 – 66.9%
2011	57,264	44,854 - 78.3%	

Mumbai – Comparative figures of Births & Deaths

Year	Births	Deaths	Excess of Deaths over Births
1955	788	878	90
1965	856	1037	181
1975	576	1010	434
1985	601	966	365
1995	367	936	569
2002	300	858	558

Parsees in numbers:

1901 – 94,910

1991 – 76,382

2001 – 69,601

2011 – 57,264

National (India) birth rate:

26 births per 1000 – All India.

6 to 7 births per 1000 – Parsees.

National (India) death rate:

8 deaths per 1000 – All India.

16 to 18 per 1000 – Parsees.

AGE PROFILE.**Population under 6 years:**

14.9% - All India.

4.7% - Parsees.

Population over 60 years:

31% - Parsees (probably highest in the world).

5% - India.

15% - In Japan (considered to be very high).

**Census
1951 to 2011
Breakup of Religious Groups**

Religious Group	Population % 1951	Population % 1961	Population % 1971	Population % 1981	Population % 1991	Population % 2001	Population % 2011
Zoroastrianism	0.13%	0.09%	0.09%	0.09%	0.08%	0.06%	n/a
Jainism	0.46%	0.46%	0.48%	0.47%	0.40%	0.41%	0.37%
Buddhism	0.74%	0.74%	0.70%	0.70%	0.77%	0.77%	0.70%
Other religions /No religion	0.43%	0.43%	0.41%	0.42%	0.44%	0.72%	0.9%
Sikhism	1.79%	1.79%	1.89%	1.92%	1.94%	1.87%	1.72%
Christianity	2.3%	2.44%	2.60%	2.44%	2.32%	2.34%	2.30%
Islam	9.8%	10.69%	11.21%	11.75%	12.61%	13.43%	14.23%
Hinduism	84.1%	83.45%	82.73%	82.30%	81.53%	80.46%	79.80%

THE FUTURE SCENARIO

PARSI POPULATION IN INDIA CENSUS FIGURES 2011 AND PROJECTIONS TILL 2101		
YEAR	CENSUS/ PROJECTED	PERCENTAGE DECREASE
2001	69,601	--
2011	57,264	18% (Actual)
2021	46,956	18% (Projected)
2031	38,504	18% (Projected)
2041	31,573	18% (Projected)
2051	25,890	18% (Projected)
2061	21,230	18% (Projected)

2071	17,408	18% (Projected)
2081	14,274	18% (Projected)
2091	11,705	18% (Projected)
2101	9,600	18% (Projected)

Q2. How would you describe the Z seniors in terms of life satisfaction and living conditions?

A2. Zarathushtis were once considered to be an affluent community.

At the current juncture, as the community faces serious challenges on the demographic front, issues of economic vulnerability of the community have drawn considerable attention.

TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) in a report published in December 2009 on the study 'Socio Economic and Educational Status of the Parsi Community in India' with specific reference to the economically weaker sections, have mentioned in the Chapter 'Conclusions and Recommendation':

"Despite the perceived general economic affluence of the community, there are reasons to believe that Parsis are a heterogeneous (assorted) community in terms of their socio-economic status. The WPR (Work Participation Rate) of the community is the lowest among all religious minorities barring only Muslims. The growing dependency ratio, which is a fallout of the skewed demographic profile, has restricted the proportion of economically active population in the community. Poverty in the community may not be conspicuous due to the support extended by the Trusts/ institutions. Provision of shelter at nominal rent has been one of the major help provided by such institutions. Hence, Parsi poor may not be visible on the streets or even in slums. However, certain sections of the community are economically disadvantaged and live on very low subsistence support.

Contrary to the general belief, this study reveals that there is a small fraction of the community which exists even below the poverty line (BPL) as per the official definition of poverty".

The skewed age composition of the population has resulted in a high dependency ratio. Dependency ratio consists of the proportion of the population that is not economically active. Whilst the 2001 census had identified 24.1% of the Parsee population being 'senior citizens', the 2011 census had seen the number of senior citizens rise to 31%.

On account of the dependency ratio having increased, the current scenario has led to several issues such as:

a) young earning members having to bear the financial responsibility of looking after their aging parents and aged grandparents cannot afford to do so and perforce have to get them admitted to Senior Citizens Centre / Old Age Homes / Infirmarys.

- b) With the Parsee community being an ageing community, it is only natural that substantial expenses have to be incurred on health issues of the elders in the family, which many cannot afford.
- c) A substantial number of families reside in Charity flats provided by the Panchayet and other Trusts which are generally small in size, some being two room + kitchen flats, whilst many are one room + kitchen flats that are inadequate to provide privacy. This has also contributed to shifting family elders to be shifted to Senior Citizens Centre / Old Age Homes / Infirmaries.

Q3. Any issues that you would like to highlight that relate to Z seniors in India.

A3. Considering the situation explained in Q2 above, the establishment of Centres for Senior Citizens in India has become a necessity whose time has come. There are now quite a few institutions serving our community's senior citizens at locations such as Mumbai, Surat, Navsari, Devlali etc.

I am pleased to share the background of how the WZO Trust Funds Centres for Senior Citizens came into being.

It is with great pride that we quote the verse below that aptly illustrate the feeling that our residents express about our Centres in which they spend the evening of their lives.

“Aagar firdoze baroo-e-Zamin aast,
hamin ast wa hamin ast was hamin ast”
(If there is paradise on earth,
it is here, it is here, it is here.)

Amongst the multifarious public welfare activities that the WZO Trust Funds undertake, one of the most important is that of running our Centres for Senior Citizens at Navsari. Years have gone by since our first Centre for Senior Citizens was established in 1998 prompting us to reflect, with pride and happiness.

Our institutions have built up a reputation as being havens of hospitality and happiness, a home away from home where our senior citizens reside in a serene and secure environment, free from stress and difficulties, where lives are put into their days, not days into their lives.

A consistently full house of residents is indicative of the popularity that our institutions enjoy.

The idea to set up a Centre for Senior Citizens first took root into our minds in the latter half of the 1990's, when we realized the sad but stark reality faced by many of our senior citizens – living alone or living in congestion with three generations in small flats, some very lonely, some unwanted, some uncared for.

We have all along held the view that after a lifetime of working, raising families and contributing to their success in countless ways, senior citizens deserve to spend all their remaining days with dignity, in an environment of love and understanding.

\
Many think that poverty only means being hungry and homeless. What they do not realize is that the poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for, is poverty of a far greater kind, a poverty that no one should be made to endure.

Thus, was born our dream to do something tangible and positive for our senior citizens. It was our good fortune that the Trustees of Bai Maneckbai P.B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund too shared this dream with us.

Vision without action remains a meaningless dream, action without vision is simply a waste of time, but when vision is coupled with action the positive outcome that emerges has the energy that turns things around and even changes the world for many people.

The culmination of the common vision shared by WZO Trust Funds and the Trustees of Bai Maneckbai P.B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund was backed by tangible action resulting in the creation of our Bai Maneckbai P.B. Jeejeebhoy Centre for Senior Citizens opening its doors in the service of the community on 6th January 1998.

With growing popularity and patronage, it was not long before we realized the need to expand the existing facilities. The biblical saying “cometh the hour, cometh the man” proved to be very accurate. Rena & Behram Baxter of USA arrived on the scene. After just one visit to the institution, they gave a commitment to fund the construction of another similar institution.

Divinity has always smiled on us and showered us with bounties. We were very fortunate to procure property on the same street as our existing Centre and link it up from the rear with our existing institution. Our Dolat & Hormusji Vandrewala Senior Citizens Centre too became a reality on 15th December 2005.

A further bounty came our way in 2013 when the Dudha & Avari families of Mumbai & Navsari handed over to us their ancestral house adjoining our Dolat & Hormusji Vandrewala Senior Citizens Centre. Their largesse has facilitated our creating additional residential facilities.

For our residents, their golden years are probably the most precious and pleasant stage of their lives – residing in comfortable surroundings, reflecting on memories of days gone by, mingling in the company of contemporaries, enjoying games, picnics and going on annual outings to Udvada and our beautiful Sanatorium at Sanjan, doing their own things, worries and stress a thing of the past – the perfect way to spend the long evenings of one’s existence, enjoying life to the full, wanting it to go on and on and on.

We are extremely proud that ours is perhaps the only institution for Senior Citizens in our country, but definitely the only one for Zoroastrians, where not one but two pairs of our residents got joined in

matrimony. Both the weddings, took place in September, one each in 2015 and the other in 2016. Both weddings were celebrated with all the relevant four days ceremonies, music, dance and other festivities, not forgetting the traditional 'lagan nu bhonu' that our residents, staff and guests enjoyed. Such is the stuff that dreams are made of. Our experience over the years has been that the more we praise and celebrate the lives of our residents, life continues to give us more reasons to celebrate.

The health of our residents being one of our prime concerns, we remain alert to their wellbeing. Arrangements have been made for quality medical care and hospitalisation, when required. A sick bay has also been created to look after those afflicted by minor ailments.

A doctor visits our Centres for periodical checkups of our residents. Physiotherapy sessions are available to iron out kinks and a separate room dedicated for this purpose. Yoga classes are conducted. 'Bowen Therapy' (moves that catalyse the body at macro and micro levels) applications are all made available to our residents.

Whilst our cost per resident is around Rs.12,000 per person per month, considering the financial constraints faced by our residents and their families, our charges are not only moderate but also flexible, depending on the economic conditions of our residents – the maximum that we charge (from mid-2018 onwards) is Rs.6,000/- per month for a single room covering full board and lodge. Charges for other rooms depend on the economic conditions of our residents. Many of our economically challenged residents reside gratis. The facilities enjoyed by all our residents, irrespective of their subscriptions are at par, with no distinction being made.

The financial shortfall that we face are made up by our worthy donors. We are most grateful to the Trustees and Administration of Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust, Bai Hirabai Tata Trust for their largesse over the years, initially in funding the day to day running of our institution/s and thereafter providing a generous corpus.

Our special gratitude to the generous Trustees of Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton & Macao for their continued support over the years in all projects that we undertake, including the running and maintenance of our Senior Citizens Centres.

It is only on account of such support that we receive from donors, big and small, individuals and institutions that we have been able to provide quality services to our residents.

Our staff have been trained to realize that in elders, the hunger for love is far greater than the hunger for bread, that love is a fruit that is in season at all times and within reach of every hand. We take great pride in following and being guided by what Saint Mother Teresa had said – “It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in doing. It is not how much we give but how much love we put in the giving”.

Our residents are all happy and secure being an integral part of the extended family of WZO Trust Funds. The emotions that our residents feel and the affection they shower upon us is humbling and at

the same time satisfying. Their praise is sweet, but there is no greater joy for us than to know their hearts appreciate what we are doing for them.

Many senior citizens have taken advantage of the facilities that we offer and have transformed their golden years into the most happy and exciting days of their lives.

For this we have to express sincere thanks to the benevolent Trustees of Bai Maneckbai P.B. Jeejeebhoy Deed of Settlement Fund and Rena & Behram Baxter of USA, for fully funding and furnishing the two respective institutions.

Our happy band of residents symbolize the truth echoed by Robert Browning in his immortal words: Come grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be, The last of life, For which the first was made. Farrokh Jijina

RESEARCH: Facilities available for Z Seniors in Mumbai: Nawaz Merchant

From Hindustan Times, Dec 30, 2019

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/only-1-of-4-sanatoriums-open-parsis-seek-revival-of-heritage-bldgs/story-38kackWNTnHbvbLtgxLWhK.html>

With just one of the four Parsi sanatoriums in the city — built by philanthropists towards the end of 19th or early 20th century — surviving, members of the community have demanded that these heritage buildings be revived, and not be sold off to builders.

According to Marzban Giara, a Parsi historian, **the four sanatoriums — built near the sea, at Juhu, Bandra, Colaba and Kemps Corner** — were used by members of the community back when there weren't enough houses for Parsis in their colonies. A lot of them would stay in these sanatoriums, moving from one to the other, until they were allotted houses. They were also used by poor members of the community, visiting Mumbai from other cities, and by the sick to recuperate.

Of these, while **the one at Juhu does not exist anymore, the sanatorium at Bandra is being used by some community members and there is a court dispute over the same. The sanatorium at Kemps Corner has been shut, while the Colaba one is also embroiled in a dispute.** Urvax Dhanda, who stayed in these sanatoriums for five years in the 1990s, said the community needs these heritage buildings. "The sanatoriums would always be full. They were provided with basic facilities and would get electricity after sunset. A lot of us would move from the Petit sanatorium to the one at Bandra and Jasswalla sanatorium at Juhu. The one at Juhu doesn't exist anymore, while the Bandra one hardly houses a few people. **The Petit sanatorium has been shut.** The community requires these sanatoriums and if they are opened, people would still use the service," he said.

Kersi Randeria, a trustee of Bombay Parsi Punchayet (BPP), the caretakers of the Sorabji Byramji Sanatorium at Bandra, said that while there are few people who stay there currently, the cost of maintaining these structures is very high. “The population of our community has been declining and now there aren’t many left homeless in the community. This is why not a lot of people use these sanatoriums. We needn’t monetize the properties completely, but it can be used in a way that the community benefits from the facilities created by our forefathers,” said Randeria.

Tehmtan Dumasia, a resident of Godrej Baug, who stayed at these sanatoriums for three years, recalls how every three months they had to exchange rooms with their neighbours as otherwise they would be considered as tenants. “People would come in from other parts of the countries for weddings or if their houses were getting renovated. If a newly married couple was planning to start a family, they would stay there,” said Dumasia.

Apart from demanding the revival of these sanatoriums, members of the community are also concerned about some of these heritage structures being sold off to builders. Last month, Khushru Zaiwala, an advocate, **sent a notice to trustees of Framjee Dinshaw Petit Parsee Sanatorium at Kemp’s Corner**, alleging workers sent by a construction firm were found taking measurements at the property. The sanatorium is protected as a grade-III heritage structure under Mumbai’s urban heritage conservation laws, which allows only changes and adaptive re-use for such buildings. The letter, a copy of which is with HT, stated: “In the interest of justice, it is prayed that the present trustees carry out the intentions of the original donor and reopen the said charity, for the benefit of the needy of the Parsi community and obliged, failing which it would amount to the breach of trust.”

Zaiwala said the sanatorium was built by Sir Baronett Dinshaw Petit for his elder son. However, after his son passed away young, Petit donated the house to charity and it was used as a sanatorium. Later, it was used to house Zoroastrian families waiting for a house in community colonies. “There are a lot of Parsis who require housing. Instead of trying to monetize the property, it needs to be used for the actual purpose that it was built for,” said Zaiwala. However, the manager of the sanatorium denied having received any notice from Zaiwala, and said the structure has been shut for around a decade now as it needs repairs. “We cannot let people stay here because the structure is in desperate need of repairs. We have also called for tenders. Once we get the right quotation, the restoration work can start,” said Mehroo Srivastav, manager of the sanatorium.

New home for Parsi Seniors in PUNE

A new 16-studio, ground-plus-one-storey, Healing Touch, Senior Citizens Home at Village Garade, 23 kms from downtown Poona, has been started by ex-merchant navy officer Capt Adi Mistry on March 5, 2022. At present nine seniors are set to reside in the apartments that are “fully furnished with everything from toilet paper to geysers,” he notes. Facilities include a big recreation room, with a 48-inch television set and “almost all basic indoor games... The land has a long

walkway, with huge trees, all along the roads... We plant about 300 trees every year," Mistry stated. Wife Khurshid manages the staff.



Clockwise from above: Khurshid and Capt Adi Mistry; seniors at a meal; interior and exterior view of Healing Touch

Rooms are available at a predetermined price, and mostly on sharing basis. "The basic amount starts with about Rs 36,000 per month and gradually comes down to Rs 18,000 per month for long-term residents," noted Adi. "This can reduce further if we get donations... We can increase the number of senior citizens by building more infrastructure, as I have more plots."

"I have already invested about four crore rupees to fulfill my mother's (Shera) dream, wish and command," the 72-year-old Adi stated. "Dikra kai bhi karé tau buddha o né sambhaaljé, dua laagsé (Whatever you do, take care of the elderly... you will receive their blessings)," the senior lady reportedly told Adi. "I have prospered... séva karu tau su khottu chhè (what is the harm in serving)?" he told us.

Mistry may be contacted on 9822209752; Healing Touch, At and Post Village Garade, Gat. No 2313/1, Taluka Purandar, Dist Poona, 412301. F. J.

BRAND NEW FACILITY IN NAVI MUMBAI: FROM PERCY MASTER



+91 9821012869 percym@mastergroups.com>

THE LIVING TREE. As people grow they turn from saplings to plants, to old wise trees. They are full of Love, Wisdom and Stories, and need to be cared for. WE DO.

This is the principle on which this Senior Citizens Home has been conceived by our Trust, MASTER FOUNDATION. It was my wife Arin and me who always wanted to create a facility in memory of our Parents.

The facility is very centrally located at Vashi, New Bombay where 200 Zarthusti families residing in and around. at Kopar-khairane in Navi Mumbai, adjacent to Doongaji Dar-e-Meher. The New Bombay Zoroastrian Association, requested us to build 2 Floors for an Old Age Home.

The facility has spacious single and double rooms fully furnished. Total 11 Rooms and can accommodate 20 persons, with attached Bathrooms and a balcony. AC is provided on request. WE have provided a large Kitchen and Recreation area with a large balcony. Music, library and Tele facilities. 24 hour resident Manager, Lift, Security, CCTV and a tie up with nearby Hospital for any emergency.

To start with we would like Senior Citizens over 60 years and mobile. We can look at case to case basis and are flexible. We are currently awaiting Government permissions which we should get any day before we commission.

Yes, we have many old age home facilities. Gamadia Infirmary, Cama Convalescing Home, J J Hospital Parsi Ward, Masina Hospital Parsi Home. These are in addition to BPP Facilities. Our Zarathushti population is aging very fast and more such facilities are required. We have made a beginning and will surely expand as we go along.

We have a fairly large recreation area with seat out. Indoor games, Music, Library and few outings to Agiari next door. Planning a few picnics if practical.

All Meals are provided, including Tea/Coffee. The tariff envisaged is Rs 19k per person., all inclusive.

Question: If they fall sick and are hospitalized briefly, do you take them back, or they have to find their own accommodation elsewhere. Answer: We will take them back subject to availability of rooms.

Question: Is the resident manger a nurse, or a non-professional, if a resident falls sick in the middle of the night are they able to give some medical attention, call a Dr or shift them to a hospital. Answer: Professional with prior experience. Local Doctor on call, nearby Hospital tie up. Monthly check ups by the Doctor visiting. Fortunately, our facility is top of the line and people who have seen it would like to

leave their homes and settle here !!Frankly, as mentioned, rooms are well appointed with all facilities.



MASTER FOUNDATION
MASTERY IN SERVITUDE

The **LIVING TREE**

As People Grow They
Turn From Saplings To Plants
To Old Wise Trees,
They are full of love,
Wisdom and Stories
And need to be cared For
WE DO.

 **Require Vacancy For
Senior Citizens Home
Resident Manager
Age upto 50 yrs**

Master Foundation
Plot no 14 / 2 Sector 9
Next to Agyari
Opposite Karika Devi Mandir
Kopar Khairane
Navi Mumbai 400709
masterfoundation@mastergroups.com



FROM CALCUTTA: Prochy Mehta President, Calcutta Parsee Club.

1. We have 228 people over the age of 60 out of a total population of 380. 140 are women, 88 are men.
2. We in Kolkata through our CZCRFC (Calcutta Zoroastrian Communities Religious and Community Fund) take very good care of our aging population. We have set up a team of care givers who regularly visit the elderly. They help them in any way possible. From taking them to the doctor or post office or to the mall for shopping. If they fall ill the trustees are just a phone call away. In the covid crisis they supplied oxygen concentration machines for home use and set up a recuperation area where they could complete their isolation time away from the family. They were admitted into hospitals even when hospital rooms were literally not available and daily reports on the patients were coaxed from the doctors and conveyed to their families. Birthdays are celebrated and we have a special Senior Citizens function every year. Even at the height of the pandemic food was delivered to those who were unable to cope on their own.

A few old people have become permanent residents at our dharamsala where all their needs are taken care off..We have various schemes for reimbursement of expenses within set limits, medical, household, support staff etc.

Basically, anyone who has a problem can and does reach out for help.

3. On Navroz day, at the Calcutta Parsee Club Navroz function we are celebrating the 100th birthday of Mrs Roshan Burge.
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6. On Navroz day, at the Calcutta Parsee Club Navroz function we are celebrating the 100th birthday of Mrs Roshan Burge.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/41647865045/?ref=share>

This is the link to our Facebook page

You can see all our Calcutta Parsi Club activity on this page.

Photos of Roshan Burge birthday celebration is here too.

Prochy Mehta <prochymehta@hotmail.com>

President

Calcutta Parsee Club.

My phone # is +919830020728 and you can connect with me on what's app.

P.S. The Calcutta Parsee Club is sending an entry For The WZC World Pandemic Heroes. It will be sent shortly.

PAKISTAN: Sunnu Golwalla

Roshan Mehri and Gulbanu Bamji who are Chairlady and Honorary Secretary respectively of Parsi General Hospital

- Meher Cawasji who heads the Arman Home for the elderly
- Kermin Parakh, President, Banu Mandal has made general comments which have been included
- Two-penny bit from me, as per my experience with my 107 year old Mother and interacting with residents of the Infirmary where she is since 2007.

We are trying to gain a global picture of Zoroastrian seniors. We are interested in the following information

1. Can you estimate how large is the elderly population of Zarathushtis in Pakistan ?

By elderly if you mean 80+ then some are quite healthy and independent. We have considered those who need 'assisted living' and could be under 80 as well.

- We CAN identify a handful of 80+ who lead a very meaningful life, but more info than that would be encroaching on their privacy.

In Karachi we have about 1000 Zoroastrians and we think at least 15-20% of them would be on 'assisted living'. About 100-150 persons on assisted living. This may need to be checked, it is a guesstimate.

Assisted living: this is in three groups:

- a. Infirmary Section of Parsi General Hospital (mostly for immobile persons and those without family) 16 persons at present. Max they may have is 25.
- b. Arman Home for the elderly (for mobile persons, with family to turn to in case of serious illness) 8 residents at present, 16 maximum can reside.
- c. Individuals living on their own or with family, but require assistance. Unidentified and larger number

2 How would you describe the Z seniors in Pakistan (at present only Karachi. Lahore info will be added later) in terms of life satisfaction and living conditions?**Living conditions**

- KZBM is at the forefront in this ensuring material and financial needs of our community at large and particularly of the elderly.
- Other Trusts also assist generously
- Could say physically our elders live in VERY good conditions

Gulbanu Bamji, Honorary Secretary of Parsi General Hospital has also given detailed feedback on facilities and care given to the residents of the Infirmary





We keep our hospital spanking clean and hygienic. All our staff, residents and Board members are vaccinated

- Every resident is shampooed and bathed every morning, followed by a hearty breakfast
- 3 meals and 2 snacks are provided with thought to the dietary need and season change requirements and ensure good protein intake and interesting meals
- Our generous donors regularly give elaborate lunch or snacks, on their family's festivities
- 2 of our residents are 60+ and 70+ but others are 80+

Life Satisfaction

- KZBM and YMZA entertain our elders on festive occasions
- Take them for outings (those who are willing)
- Community frequently send 'treats' for PG residents
- You will agree this is also subjective. Unsatisfied mostly pine to live in their own home, and that is sometimes not possible if they are quite incapacitated. Some pine for family who could be overseas or too busy.

3 Any issues that you would like to highlight that relate to Z seniors in Pakistan.

Meher Cawasji who heads the Arman Home has talked about the following. THIS is where WZC input will be valued:

- The elderly population in Pakistan in general (not confined to the Zoroastrians only) tend to be very set in their ways hence not very accommodating at times and not open to change. This can make

it challenging to look after them in homes especially in terms of taking care of their health and wellbeing the way it should be.

- Majority of the elderly Zoros in Pakistan find it difficult to leave the comfort of their own home and surroundings, which is understandable: however when coupled with the fact that living in a "home" is considered shameful to most people in the East, this makes it difficult to convince them to move to a home for their own benefit. The move in most cases has been forced.
- They feel like they can still do everything as they could before and are unaware/unable to accept that they can no longer do them (e.g they could fall or injure themselves if they refuse to walk with assistance such as a stick, walker or attendant)
- A lot of our seniors are unwilling to accept or understand the logic of things that are beneficial or practical for them, and do try to oppose them. (eg, why there should be more fiber in their diet etc) So, when it is said that old age is like a second childhood it's hitting the nail on the head and hence we try our best to give them the tender loving care that they deserve.
- That being said, I would not call the above issues "solvable" per se as at this age, to expect anyone to change is impossible.

However, where assistance/WZC input would be useful is in terms of combating the depression and loneliness that is faced by most of the elders here as a lot of them are without their families. At Arman House we have noticed that despite the fact that the residents have each other for company, a few of them still face depression and combating that is the main issue. Practical suggestions that can be used in our small community would be welcome.

This is an opportunity to inform the WZC 2022 attendees about the lifestyle and needs of Z seniors in your area. The output of this session will be used to write a solutions whitepaper to address global needs of our seniors.

Sunnu Golwalla's observations

- Being unable to do things elders once did, and having to 'depend' on others, takes a toll on their self-esteem. IF they are engaged in activities they are 'familiar' with or 'enjoyed' doing like
 - o "chalo bhakra bunaveeyeh!" on the promise that it will only be upto making the dough and cutting bakhras. Being in the kitchen does not feel safe due their age/immobility. Then have those bakhras at tea time. If appreciate it will elate their spirit. "Puri bunavey " "pakora'
 - o Some may love to embroider. There is a way for this too.
 - o "Chalo chalk puryeeh" and help them select chalk boxes. Maybe suggest what colours go where.
 - o Toran is another thing to involve them in. " Kae sabi per haar aajey."

- o Behram yazd ritual with channa etc
- o Ask them to narrate recipes. They love to share their experience.
- o Simple day-to-day things they did all their life and enjoyed will make them feel useful. This is CRITICAL in my opinion.
- Leaving home and own surrounding and settling in one room with limited stuff is deeply hurtful. So many attachments have to be sacrificed. This can also cause depression, withdrawal within oneself for self-protection. Meher's suggestion that small homes with fewer residents helps people 'connect' and feel like family, as in Arman Home, needs to be explored. As the community is ageing and young are moving to better their lives, future need for this may increase. Also people who will be elderly in 15-20 years from now will have lived rather well and done varied things. A thought in this direction can be taken, keeping THEIR life-style and expectations.

One to one chatting that Roshan suggests is wonderful: volunteers no doubt will be guided what to talk that will 'delight', 'engage', 'connect', 'look forward to next visit' etc.

·To uplift spirit, technology can help in couple of ways that come to mind:

·Music of 'their' era. Most may love them. If similar taste, then these could be played when residents use 'family room/common room' and enjoy in company of each other. Some may begin to sing, others may clap. It DOES cheer. Dinci (a resident) may dance too!!

Short videos played on TV so all can see. These are 2-3 minute duration and are mostly on WhatsApp from where they can be zoomed on TV: Funny ones, crafts, 'do it yourself', music, dance, etc. Play them and watch what interests them. Volunteers can be requested to come with these and entertain the residents.

We need to visualise our grandmothers: and think of what they did, enjoyed, their life style and RECREATE THAT to help them 'connect' and 'belong.'"

Elder Care Team

Karachi



Roshan Mehri, Chairlady of Parsi General Hospital and Honorary Treasurer of Banu Mandal writes:

From my perspective, I only have one thing to add. The main issue for the elderly I see is only of loneliness and not having someone to talk to. It is a universal truth for our community that the youngsters move away and the elderly parents are left to fend on their own.

Children and the Community are able to provide that they are looked after, kept clean and healthy but more importantly, the elderly need someone to come and talk to them and be a friend. Their emotional needs are not met. At that age folks do not need material gifts; they need company and someone to listen to their stories.

I have been thinking of devising a system of getting the younger lot to give Community hours work with the elderly. Several of them are unable to pay back the loans taken, and we at least at KZBM can give them the option to pay back in Community Hours. I am in the process of discussing this with our MC. Maybe thoughts on that line could be helpful.

This Saturday, we had a function at the BMH Parsi General Hospital when our dear Rashna Gazdar and her team of young musicians entertained all the patients at the hospital with their beautiful music, songs and dances. Everyone enjoyed it thoroughly. Due to Covid, in the past two years visits were

restricted and the elderly had become very lonely. The Evening's entertainment perked them up and, in the end, when we sang Chaiye Hame Zarthosti, everyone joined in and sang along!



Also, Ms. Yasmin Charna donated a very beautiful cross-stitch photo frame to the Hospital which took her two and a half years to make. This event was covered by Cyrus Karanjia and all the pics are given in the link below. The link will expire in 6 days. Kindly view the photos and select any that you may wish to keep for the WZC.

Thanks, and Kind regards, Roshan.

UK: Perses Sethna

1. Can you estimate how large is the elderly population of Zarathushtis in UK?

We estimate the total number of elderly Zarathustis in the UK- those over 65 years of age- to be approximately 650 (ie in the range 500 - 800).

- THE ELDERLY ZOROASTRIAN POPULATION is based on 165 OAP (Old Age Pensioner) members in a membership of 1300. For an estimated Z population in the UK of say 5000 the estimated elderly population would be 635. (NOTE: pensioner's age now is raised to 67).
- Our migration study indicates that the first wave of Zoroastrians came from the India/Pakistan region around the 1950s era. The East African Zs from Zanzibar, Kenya Tanzania and Aden arrived in the 1960s. Finally, the Irani Zs arrived in the 1980s, but as few as 150 have stayed behind, most of them migrated to the USA.
- If the average (student) age of migrants from the Indian subcontinent in 1955 is assumed to be 25, they would average over the age of 90 this year.
- If the family person's age of the migrant group from East Africa in 1965 is assumed to be 30, they would average over the age of 87 this year.
- WE SEEM TO HAVE A HIGHER PROPORTION OF AN AGEING POPULATION.
- We registered 42 Z deaths in 2020 and 39 deaths in 2021 in the UK, much higher than in recent times than ever before, almost all due to old age. This trend is worryingly going to continue for some time.

2. How would you describe the Z seniors in terms of life satisfaction and living conditions?

We would describe UK Z seniors to be relatively well-placed and comfortable in terms of living conditions and life satisfaction, for the following reasons:

- At the National level everyone enjoys the benefits of free health care from birth to death, under the National Health Service (NHS), They enjoy UK Pension benefits, education, housing and other social benefits. For the pensioner there is free travel and several concessions generally ensuring a reasonable living standard for elderly citizens. When it comes to social care, in care/nursing homes etc, now there is a life time cap of £86,000 total expenditure for an old person needing such care, free of worries of losing all their assets.
- Z Seniors are generally well supported in terms of companionship, particularly in the urban areas. This is provided by the Zoroastrian community- supported wholly by the ZTFE- including contacts in their local areas, with community and special events for them at the Zoroastrian Centre. There is also a regular telephone contact system organised by our volunteers to keep our Z Seniors well connected and ensure they have help when needed.
- Also, all likely vulnerable Zoroastrian elders are provided with a data form displayed at their place of abode with the ZTFE contact list in case of emergencies arising. ZTFE maintains close liaison with the Home Office and Ministry of Community affairs, with contacts to the

health officers, the police departments, local councils, coroner's office, the undertakers etc to maintain the well-being of the elderly and the vulnerable of our community.

- Other local community organisations, including the Interfaith Groups also provide activities and support for UK senior citizens- eg volunteers to take senior citizens out to do their weekly shopping and other routine chores.
- There has been an increased focus in the last 2 years during the Pandemic, both by the ZTFE and other local UK community organisations, to maintain very good links to senior citizens- to provide contact via telephone calls etc, and help for shopping, medical services etc as needed.

3. Any issues that you would like to highlight that relate to Z seniors in UK.

A key issue for some UK Z Seniors is that, notwithstanding the high level of support and activities and events on offer, it can be difficult for them to make the journey to activity centres such as the main Z Centre in North West London, or to meet fellow community members generally.

- While there are willing volunteers available to drive them to events, the journey and inconvenience is still prohibitive for many.
- Some Z Seniors may choose to move into commercially- provided UK 'retirement homes' (assisted living accommodation for more independent seniors) or care homes (for seniors with greater medical / care needs). However in such cases, our Z Seniors may lose out in Z community life, religiosity, their value system, customs, festivities and above all - food.
 - A part of the solution to this (under the Zoroastrian Senior Citizens Home project plan) is to arrange for those Z senior citizens who wish to co-locate with others to live as neighbours in existing commercial assisted independent accommodation. This would enable those most unable to travel to live in a close community environment with other Z Seniors, and help them to maintain a warm and sociable community lifestyle and to maintain their value system and pride.
 - ZTFE have also been debating and discussing the establishment of a Senior Citizens Home in one of the London suburbs. The cost of buying an existing facility or buying a share in one and then the challenge of successfully managing it (including compliance with complex Health & Safety regulations) have been some of several reasons why this project has not yet been taken up. ZTFE welcomes inputs from other Associations in the diasporas, who may have similar projects in mind.





CANADA (Vancouver): Zav Patel

ZSBC was in the process of rebuilding a New Stand-Alone Darbe at the present site in Burnaby, when the City of Burnaby approached us with an amendment to the Official Community Plan to allow us to build up to 20 residences for our community integrated with the Darbe Mehr. We are proposing to build a community of up to 16 Independent Seniors' Apartments and up to 4 larger Family Units. We believe that both the families and seniors will benefit from living in a mixed community.

The Darbe Mehr portion of the project will consist of a Prayer Hall which will be a single floor attached structure with a meditation garden and a pond. The rest of the Darbe Mehr will consist of a Library/Quiet Room, Games Room, Residents' Lounge, and Exercise Room, Media Room/Youth Room and a large Banquet Room (200+ capacity) with Kitchen. All these amenities will be available to the residents of the Living Darbe Mehr without them having to leave the site. We are planning to provide the residents with optional housekeeping services and delivered meals. Depending on the financing available, we consider some affordable units and some market priced units.

We are in the process of getting approval of the Darbe Mehr Plan from the City of Burnaby. In the near future we will present the Plan along with cost estimates to the Zoroastrian Community of British Columbia for feedback and approval. We plan to adjust our plans based on the feedback from the City and The ZSBC Community.

From Cyrus Rivetna for ZSBC

The ideas are still conceptual, and nothing is on paper yet. We're just getting started.

ZSBC (in collaboration with Arbab Rustom Guiv Zoroastrian House of BC) was able to purchase the property (and single-family home) adjacent to their current facility, so they now have sufficient land to build a new Dar e Mehr. Due to the current housing shortage in the Vancouver area, the Town is offering to change zoning for certain properties if the project includes housing.

The intent is to build a Dar e Mehr with Prayer Hall, Banquet Hall, Kitchen, Youth Room, Library and ancillary spaces. The housing will be about 20 homes - 1-bedroom and 2-bedrooms. Four will be 'affordable' to leverage some City relief. The current plan is to sell them as condominiums at 80% of market rate, to Zoroastrians. There's a possibility they may be retained by the community and rented as apartments.

I envision these apartments are for a variety of people - seniors looking to downsize, anyone with a desire to live with other Zoroastrians, a family recently immigrated to Canada, anyone in need of short-term housing during a crisis, etc.

In New Zealand, there is a building that is rented by recent immigrants. Many stay there for a few years while they get a foothold in New Zealand. The New Vancouver building could serve a similar function (in Canada).

We request the readers to reflect and ponder upon the situation facing the Zarathushti elderly in the very near future.

Authors: Nawaz Merchant and Dolly Dastoor
