

Gujaratis in Ahmedabad 'age' faster than those in Vancouver, Canada - Times of India

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Gujaratis in Ahmedabad 'age' faster than those in Vancouver, Canada

Parth Shastri | TNN | Updated: Dec 5, 2018, 05:41 IST



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IIT Gandhinagar

Ahmedabad: Apart from the onset of wrinkles, joint pains and greying hair, what defines old age? Does it have anything to do with a person's own perception? Do factors such as country and socio-economic condition play a role in it?

A study by [IIT Gandhinagar](#) (IIT-Gn), which compares the experience of Gujarati senior citizens in Ahmedabad for an Indian sample and the [Greater Vancouver](#) region for a Canadian sample, indicates that the answers to such questions depend on socio-economic factors.

While Gujaratis in [Canada](#) related old age with difficulty or inability in performing everyday functions, for Gujaratis in Ahmedabad, it was more to do with the change in their social roles — be it retirement or marriage of their children — as early as in their 50s in some cases.

The findings were published in the November edition of the *Innovation in Ageing* journal, in a study titled 'Ageing, body practices, gendered subjectivity and later life identities: Narratives from India and Canada.' The paper is authored by Anusmita Devi, a doctoral student at the Humanities & Social Sciences department at [IIT Gandhinagar](#) (IIT-Gn) along with her guide Dr Tannistha Samanta, assistant professor.

"Ageing was perceived differently by both groups. Participants were in the age group 50-82 years in both countries. For Canada, we chose participants who were living there for at least a decade. The majority of them were Gujaratis from African countries. We tried to gauge the differences and similarities in their experiences of growing old on the basis of qualitative data," said Anushmita Devi.

For the differences, the feeling of getting old set in early for those in Ahmedabad as they related it to change in their social role. Those in Canada were found to be active for longer years, more participatory in community, enjoying financial freedom and greater decision-making power. For the Indian group, it was tied to family responsibilities.

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The groups had similar experiences when it came to leaning towards spirituality. They were in unison for perceived gender roles. Even in senior citizens, it was women who performed domestic chores and took care of family. In both countries, women often diminished their experience of illness as secondary to that of their spouse or loved ones.

"Gujarat has a large [diaspora](#) and this research fills the gap in geriatric study — how do they cope with ageing at home and away. It also highlights how senior

citizens abroad navigate the North American ideal of an independent old age with Indian values," said Prof Samanta.

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