

COVID-19 Causes Two Year Dip In India's Life Expectancy: Study

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It is going to be two years since the coronavirus knocked at our doors. Come 2020, everything that we knew about the world was turned on its head when the deadly virus spread its wings far and wide. From lockdowns to work at home, nothing is the same anymore as we are ushered into the post-pandemic era. It will take some time to get used to the new normal it has created for us

COVID-19's impact has been immense. The global healthcare system has taken a massive hit trying to cope with its effects. The virus is known to have long-term and short-term implications for us as well. A study done by scientists from Mumbai's International Institute For Population Sciences (IIPS) is an example of these effects on India's life expectancy that has brought about some alarming results.

A Two-Year Dip

The study published in a journal named 'BMC Public Health' states that the life expectancy at birth for India has actually dipped by two years because of the virus. It was authored by one of the institute's professors named Suryakant Yadav. The all-important report said, "The life expectancy at birth in 2019 was 69.5 years for men and 72 years for women, which came down to 67.5 years and 69.8 years respectively, in 2020."

According to The Times of India, the report also looked at 'length of life inequality', that meant looking at the length of life and its variations in the population. The readings found that men in the 35-69 age category suffered the most. "The 35-79 age group had excess deaths caused by Covid in 2020 compared to normal years and it is this group that has contributed immensely to the drop," Yadav told the news publication.

The data was collated using the inferences from the Global Burden of Disease study that got information from over 145 nations, along with CovidIndia Application Programming Interface (API) portal. While India had a two-year drop in the life expectancy, countries like the USA, England and Wales saw a dip in life expectancy of over a year where as Spain saw the same of 2.28 years.

Not A Great Sign

The dip in life expectancy says a lot about the country's progress in its fight against COVID-19. While the central government figure shows around 4.5 lakh people losing their lives since March 2020, the report suggests otherwise. Data scientists suggested that around million lives were lost during the pandemic and the official figures cut nowhere close to the actual number of fatalities.

Along with that, the deadly virus also wiped out years of progress when it comes to increasing life expectancy in the country. "The Covid impact has wiped out the progress we made in the last decade to increase the life expectancy figure. India's life expectancy at birth now is the same as it was in 2010. It will take years to catch up," the report's author warned.

This significant drop in life-expectancy is to be taken seriously. Despite the low case rates at the moment, it is an alarming indication of the fact that the virus is still around us and not left us yet.

However, the dip in life expectancy rates is not a rare phenomenon. IIPS director KS James told the news publication that this is very common during epidemics. He said, "It is a dynamic figure that keeps changing every year. In Africa, life expectancy dropped drastically due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, but recouped in a few years."

Granted this may be a silver lining, but there is still a lot to do. Two days back, India crossed a milestone when it comes to administering the COVID-19 vaccine. While it is a cause for celebration, there is no time to be complacent at the moment. Many countries are reporting yet another rise in the number of cases as they had eased the pandemic-related restrictions. In India, the ongoing festive season has seen the Covid protocols going for a toss as there is no social distancing and masks at any large gathering, which increases the danger all the more.

This report should make us sit up straight and take notice. COVID-19 is not done wreaking havoc on us yet. This is not the time to be lax. The fight is long-drawn one and the onus will be on us to make sure we reach the end, safely and without any more casualties.

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