Senior Citizens are looking for Gainful Engagement Opportunities

In view of the comparatively longer lifespan and demanding lifestyle in old age, a large number of old people are looking for gainful engagement, so that they can meet their growing needs and also participate in the mainstream economy. Retired people in the age group of 60-75 years, particularly after a long pandemic-hit period, seem to be more enthusiastic towards post-retirement jobs. **Realizing the growing role and importance of Digital Literacy in day-to-day's life, older people are showing their interest in digital training in old age.**

According to latest analysis, based on interactions with 5000 older persons, by Agewell Foundation, **more than 61% retired older persons (81.5% in the age Group of 60-75 are in search of gainful engagement.**

It has been found that most of the older people remained disconnected, isolated, and underprivileged as they were not able to interact with others. They found themselves helpless as they were not able to use their smartphones for online services like booking gas, paying utility bills, filling online forms, making online payment, internet banking, applying for government services, online chatting, etc.

Realizing the growing importance and need of Digital Literacy in coming years, digitally illiterate older persons seem more eager to learn mobile and computer applications.

- During the interactions, **44% of the elderly interested in getting digital literacy training said that getting gainful engagement is their primary objective of getting digital literacy**.
- About every fourth elderly (24%) claimed that they want to remain in the mainstream by having knowledge of digital equipment.
- Approx. 26% elderly want to learn digital technology for interacting with their family members/relatives/friends.
- Remaining 6% elderly respondents had other reasons for their interest in digital literacy.

Other reasons 6%

Remain in the mainstream 24%

Eldery In Need of Digital Literacy

Gainful engagement 44%

Interaction with family members / others 26%
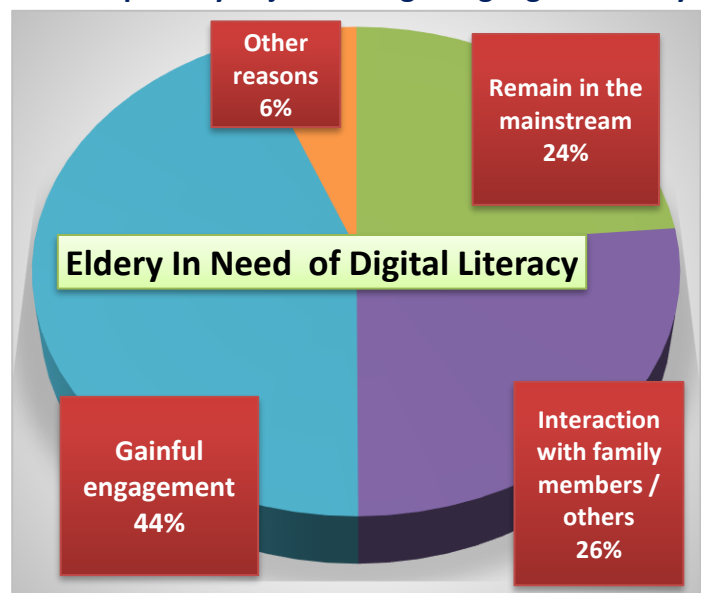
Older people need to be given digital training so that they can be involved in the mainstream and lead a more comfortable and dignified life in today's internet dominated world. The majority of old people are willing to learn soft skills and digital technology but they hardly find any support.

With the growing role and importance of digital technology in today's world, digital literacy has also become a basic need for senior citizens. Some need it to avail enormous benefits of internet and keep themselves in the mainstream, while some need it to find suitable post-retirement

gainful engagements in today's digital world, for their comparatively longer old age. It has been observed that though younger generations find digital technology quite friendly, most older people find themselves isolated due to ever widening digital divide between the generations. These are some of the major findings, emerged during the latest interactions by Agewell volunteers with over 5000 older persons across Delhi/NCR during May 2022.

Some of the other interesting findings, based on the analysis of interactions;
- Overall, 91% older persons are using mobile phones, among them 80% were among the age group of 60-70 years, while 16% mobile user elderly were in 71-80 years age group and another 3.7% were in 80+ group
- Among them 73% had their own mobile and/or sharing mobile phone with their spouse. Remaining 27% admitted that they use their other family-members' phone.
- Among them 75% elderly were using smartphones and 25% elderly had feature phones.
- Among elderly with Smartphones, **more than 70% were not using apps like Facebook, WhatsApp and another useful apps.**
- **Less than 18% elderly were computer literate**

During the interactions, it has also been found that growing digital divide has emerged as one of the most important factors responsible for the ever-increasing generation gap. Unlike younger generations, older people find it very tough to learn digital technology and keep them up-to-date all the time.

It has been observed that due to a fast-paced lifestyle, lack of patience, interpersonal issues, younger generations are not inclined to train their elderly about various features and apps of the smartphones.

Of course, there are online digital literacy courses, but hardly any course suits to older people. Since the learning process becomes slow in old age, old people need more time and attention to learn things of new age. Most of the elderly (primarily in the age groups of 70+) need one-to-one training, which is not practical in traditional computer/ digital training courses.

Himanshu Rath, Chairman, Agewell Foundation said, *"We have been conducting "**Digital Literacy Program for Old People**" in India for the last 8 years with the objective to empower them and make them digitally literate so that they can adjust themselves in modern fast-paced life and lead a more comfortable and respectable life in old age. Over 4.5 Lakh digitally illiterate older persons have been benefitted across Delhi/NCR under the program. During the Pandemic, physical digital literacy classes remain closed for almost 2 years."* He further added, *"During pandemic, NGO continued its Digital Literacy program and focused on Remote/Distance Training to digitally illiterate older persons. **In view of the growing demand for digital literacy classes from different sections of the society, particularly from older people, Agewell Foundation has once again started offline digital literacy classes in Delhi/NCR."***