

OUR VOICES, OUR RIGHTS

WHAT OLDER PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE NORMATIVE ELEMENTS OF THEIR RIGHT TO AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

BANGLADESH



Older people in Bangladesh value their autonomy and independence and want to see their right to this officially recognised by their government or the United Nations.

This is the main finding of a consultation held from December 2018 – January 2019 with 104 older people. Participants were asked what they thought about different aspects of autonomy and independence. The findings presented here aim to capture their views. They are not intended to be representative of the population of older people as a whole.

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS



104 in total:
54 women
49 men
1 skipped the question



88% urban
12% rural



23% with disabilities

Deciding where and with whom to live

Fifty-three per cent of participants said having the freedom to decide where and with whom to live was very important or important.

'Without human rights and individual freedom, quality of life is degraded and dignity is lost.'
61-year-old man

Living where they chose made them 'feel better', improved their 'quality of life' and gave them 'dignity'.

Making decisions about what matters in life

Sixty-five per cent said having the freedom to make decisions based on their own will and preferences about the things that mattered to them was very important or important. This 'empowered' them and 'made them feel better'. Life would be 'a misery' or 'worthless' if they did not have this freedom.

'Without freedom, life is worthless.'
55-year-old woman

Autonomy and independence in everyday activities and participation in society

Sixty-nine per cent said it was very important or important to carry out everyday activities based on their own will and preferences. They said they felt 'satisfied' and their 'mind was at peace'. It was 'wonderful' or 'joyous' to be able to make their own choices, and important to 'express their personal opinion'.

'Yes! We have our own opinions.'
51-year-old woman

Deciding about care and support services

Sixty-seven per cent said it was very important or important to make their own decisions about their care and support, including planning ahead for future support.

'Without freedom of choice, I couldn't get the care service I wanted.'
75-year-old man

Supported decision-making

Seventy-two per cent said having access to support for making decisions about their care and support was very important or important to them.

Sixty-eight per cent said it was very important or important to have a trusted person or persons to support them in decision-making about their care and support.

Seventy per cent said it was very important or important to have the opportunity to issue advance instructions about the kind of medical care or treatment they wanted to receive in the future.

Deciding about palliative care

Sixty-eight per cent said it was very important or important to decide for themselves, with support if necessary, the type of palliative care they would receive if they needed it. This was important because they felt palliative care was 'necessary at the end of life'. It would improve the 'quality' and 'dignity of the last stage of life'.

'[I want a] natural death without pain; nobody [will] laugh at me.'
67-year-old man

Overall response by gender

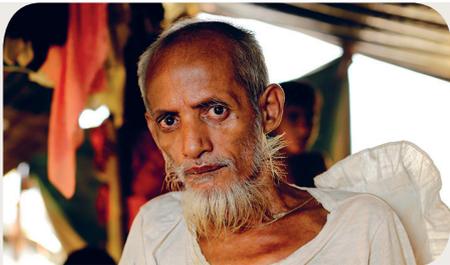
Men value their autonomy and independence more highly than women do. On average, 89 per cent of men and 47 per cent of women said it was very important or important to them.¹

Official recognition of rights by the government or the United Nations

Seventy-three per cent said it was very important or important that their government or the United Nations officially recognise their right to autonomy and independence.²

'It's the government's responsibility to ensure citizens' rights.'
71-year-old woman

Recognition would remove 'barriers' they faced to making decisions and enable them to 'voice their opinions'. Older people would be 'valued' and 'accepted' more. Recognition would lead to 'better treatment before death', 'reduce arguments among families and the government' about what action to take, and bring 'peace' to the older person.



Abir Abdullah/Age International



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1. Average based on responses to a number of questions about the level of importance attached to normative elements of the right to autonomy and independence.

2. Average based on responses to a number of questions about recognition of the normative elements of the right to autonomy and independence.

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