

OUR VOICES, OUR RIGHTS

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

LIBERIA



Older people in Liberia value their autonomy and independence highly 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 75 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



75 in total:
34 women
40 men
1 preferred not to say



65% urban
33% rural



71% with disabilities

Deciding where and with whom to live

Ninety-three per cent of participants said having the freedom to decide where and with whom to live was very important or important. It meant they could choose 'a better place' and who could 'come and live in their house'. Choosing this themselves would make them 'happy'.

'It means I can be around the people I want to be with and stay in the house I want.'
69-year-old man

Making decisions about what matters in life

Ninety-one 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 meant they could make decisions 'to improve their life' and not have 'other people decide for them.'

'It means I'm free to decide what's good for me.'
73-year-old woman

Autonomy and independence in everyday activities and participation in society

Ninety-five per cent said it was very important or important to carry out everyday activities based on their own will and preferences. It enabled them to 'do the things they wanted every day' 'without interference' or 'people telling them what to do'.

'It means a lot for me to go out every day and do the things I like to do, although I'm old now.'
72-year-old woman

Deciding about care and support services

Every participant said it was very important or important to make their own decisions about their care and support, including planning ahead for future support. They could access services that were 'good for them', would keep them 'healthy and happy' and 'help their family care for them'.

'I can get the services I need to keep me strong until I die.'
60-year-old woman

Supported decision-making

Every participant said it was very important or important to have access to support for making decisions about their care and support.

Every participant 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.

Every participant 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

Every participant 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 as they felt they could 'freely choose' the palliative care 'that is good for them when they need it'.

'Of course, we do not know about palliative care in Liberia, but it's important for it to be available to older people.'
58-year-old man

Overall response by gender

Women and men value their autonomy and independence equally highly. On average, 98 per cent of both women and men said it was very important or important to them.²

Official recognition of rights by the government or the United Nations

Ninety-nine per cent said it was very important or important that their government or the United Nations officially recognise their right to autonomy and independence.³

Recognition meant the government would 'respect' their rights and would 'provide services'. It meant decisions would not be taken 'for them without them taking part'. They would not be 'taken advantage of'. They would be 'treated as an adult' and treated well 'no matter their age'.

'I can be respected and treated as a human being.'
78-year-old woman



CECAFE



Jemma Stovell/
HelpAge International

1. 65.33% urban, 33.33% rural, 1.33% don't know.
2. 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.
3. 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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