

OUR VOICES, OUR RIGHTS

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

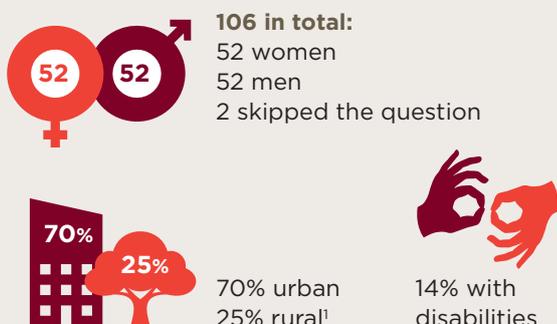
INDIA



Older people in India 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 106 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



Deciding where and with whom to live

Eighty-nine per cent of participants said having the freedom to decide where and with whom to live was very important or important because it was a 'personal' decision and they could 'decide what sort of life to lead'. It gave them 'self-respect' and 'self-esteem'. It was important for both 'physical and mental stability'.

'Otherwise it would be like being a caged bird or animal.'
67-year-old man

Making decisions about what matters in life

Ninety-eight 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 made them feel 'independent and wanted' and 'valued' by others. It gave them 'pleasure and satisfaction'.

'It gives me a sense of identity and freedom.'
57-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. This gave them 'satisfaction' and 'happiness'. It made them feel 'capable' and 'not a burden'. It gave them 'self-confidence' and was part of being 'human'.

'[Being] unable to carry out activities as I wish means I am imprisoned or incapacitated.'
67-year-old man

Deciding about care and support services

Ninety 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.

'You will be the best judge of the support services you need at this age.'
67-year-old man

Supported decision-making

Eighty-six per cent said it was very important or important to have access to support for making decisions about their care and support.

Eighty-five 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-three 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

Seventy-nine 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 brought 'peace of mind' and 'confidence there was an option for the future'. It 'indicated their autonomy' and 'free will'.

'I should be able to avail it and stop it if I feel like it.'

65-year-old woman

Overall response by gender

Women and men value their autonomy and independence equally highly. On average, 86 per cent of women and 89 per cent of men said it was very important or important to them.²

Official recognition of rights by the government or the United Nations

Seventy-six 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 was important as older people's rights needed to be 'valued' and the 'government had a major role' to 'improve policies'. Recognition could 'influence the public and bring about a change in society'. It was the government's and United Nation's duty 'to set standards' and 'enforce the law'.

'The international laws which are designed to protect our rights will definitely make our country's law stronger, better and more effective.'

66-year-old woman



Sion Jones/
HelpAge International



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HelpAge International

1. 4% answered 'Other' and 1% 'I prefer not to say'.
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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