

OUR VOICES, OUR RIGHTS

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

UGANDA



Older people in Uganda 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 137 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



137 in total:
80 women
57 men



40% urban
59% rural



48% 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 was important for 'exercising their rights as an older person'. It was part of their 'freedom of speech, participation and decision-making'. It reduced 'stress' and built 'confidence'.

'I feel liberated, empowered and respected.'
71-year-old woman

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 'loved', 'popular', 'valued' and 'important' in their communities. They felt 'excited' and 'motivated to work for themselves'.

'Because I'm a person with disabilities, I will feel included.'
72-year-old man

Autonomy and independence in everyday activities and participation in society

Ninety-one per cent said it was very important or important to carry out everyday activities based on their own will and preferences. This gave them 'authority over their life' and 'self-satisfaction'. It made them feel 'respected'. They could do these activities 'without limitation'.

'[It means] having liberty to undertake personal development without interference.'
62-year-old woman

Deciding about care and support services

Ninety-six 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.

'It means I have a choice to accept what I want and refuse what I do not want.'
90-year-old woman

Supported decision-making

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

Ninety-six 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.

Ninety-two 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

Ninety 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 would enable them to 'participate' and 'choose the right care options', and make sure they were 'not given the wrong treatment'. It would reduce their 'stress', knowing they would 'receive trusted care'.

'Because my pain will be reduced, I'll have a dignified end to my life.'
63-year-old man

Overall response by gender

Women and men value their autonomy and independence equally highly. On average, 94 per cent of women and 93 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

Ninety-four 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, they said, was important to 'provide guidance on older people's rights', 'promote' them and ensure they were 'observed'. They could 'plan' and feel 'empowered'. They would be provided 'with the right support in the future' 'at community level'. Recognition would increase understanding of their right, and their 'will and desire would be observed'.

'National and international laws give people the right, and the state has an obligation to respect a person's choice.'
71-year-old woman



Ben Small/HelpAge International



Ben Small/HelpAge International

1. 1% answered 'Other'.
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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