



Substantive Input
For
14th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Focus Area
PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE AND
IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), approximately 8.6% of India's population was aged 60 and above in 2021, highlighting the significant presence of older persons in the country's demographic landscape.

In India, the participation of senior citizens in public life and decision-making processes is crucial for promoting their inclusion, recognizing their contributions, and addressing their needs. The Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of speech and expression (Article 19), ensuring that senior citizens have a voice in public discourse and decision-making.

- **Local Self-Government:** Through Panchayats (local self-government institutions) and Municipalities, senior citizens can participate in local governance by standing for elections, voting, and engaging in community initiatives.
- **Elderly Welfare Committees:** Some states have established Senior Citizens' Welfare Committees at the local level, providing platforms for older individuals to voice their concerns, access services, and influence policies.
- **Senior Citizen Associations:** These grassroots organizations enable senior citizens to come together, advocate for their rights, and participate in collective action to address common issues.
- **Government Consultations:** The government often seeks input from older persons through consultations, advisory



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councils, and public forums when formulating policies and programs related to aging, social welfare, and healthcare.

- Civil Society Engagement: Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups work to amplify the voices of older persons, conduct awareness campaigns, and lobby for policies that promote their rights and well-being.
- Economic Participation: Older persons contribute to decision-making processes through their economic activities, such as entrepreneurship, employment, and volunteering, which enriches public life and social development.
- National Policy for Older Persons (NPOP): The NPOP outlines strategies and initiatives to promote the well-being and participation of senior citizens in various aspects of public life, including decision-making processes.
- Awareness Campaigns: NGOs and advocacy groups conduct awareness campaigns to promote the rights and participation of senior citizens in public life and decision-making processes.
- Digital Literacy Programs: Efforts are made to enhance digital literacy among older persons, enabling them to participate in online forums, access information, and engage in virtual decision-making processes.
- Inclusive Policies: Policymakers aim to develop inclusive policies and programs that consider the diverse needs and perspectives of senior citizens, ensuring their active participation in public life and decision-making processes.



Discrimination against older persons in India

Discrimination against older persons in India is prevalent across various domains, including employment, healthcare, and social interactions. Despite constitutional guarantees of the right to equality and prohibition of discrimination (Article 14), ageism persists, leading to stereotypes, prejudice, and unequal treatment based on age. Older individuals often face barriers in accessing

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opportunities, services, and resources due to age-related biases. Efforts to address discrimination against older persons require legal reforms, awareness campaigns, and policy interventions to promote inclusivity, combat ageist attitudes, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for people of all ages. Upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination is essential for fostering a society that respects and values the dignity and contributions of older individuals.

Role of older persons in public life and in decision-making processes

Older persons enrich public life and decision-making processes with their wealth of experience, wisdom, and historical perspective. Their involvement fosters intergenerational dialogue, promotes social cohesion, and ensures that policies address the diverse needs of society. As valued contributors, older individuals play a crucial role in shaping a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

Active, free, and meaningful participation of older persons in India

Active, free, and meaningful participation of older persons in India and their representative organizations is essential for fostering inclusive societies and addressing the diverse needs of aging populations. Through grassroots initiatives and advocacy efforts, these organizations empower older individuals to engage in decision-making processes, advocate for their rights, and contribute to community development. As champions of older persons' rights and well-being, these representative organizations are instrumental in shaping policies and programs that promote active aging, dignity, and social inclusion for older individuals in India.

Steps taken to ensure the participation of older persons in public life

- India has enacted laws like the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, safeguarding senior citizens' rights and ensuring their participation in decision-making without discrimination.
- National policies such as the National Policy for Older Persons outline strategies to enhance the participation of senior citizens in public life, advocating for their inclusion and representation.
- Through local self-government bodies like Panchayats and Municipalities, senior citizens are encouraged to participate in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard at the grassroots level.
- Government initiatives and civil society organizations conduct awareness campaigns to challenge ageist stereotypes and promote the active involvement of senior citizens in public life, without discrimination.

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- Programs aimed at enhancing digital literacy and advocacy skills among senior citizens empower them to engage effectively in decision-making processes, contributing their valuable insights and experiences.

Challenges and barriers that the elderly face regarding participation in public life

- Older persons often face ageist attitudes and stereotypes that undermine their capabilities and contributions, leading to marginalization and exclusion from decision-making processes.
- Digital literacy challenges and limited access to information and technology hinder older person's ability to participate effectively in public life, including accessing government services and participating in online forums.
- Inadequate infrastructure, such as inaccessible buildings and public transportation, presents physical barriers that restrict older persons' mobility and participation in community activities and public events.
- Reliance on pensions or family support for financial security may limit older persons' independence and decision-making autonomy, as they may feel obligated to conform to family expectations or lack the resources to engage in public life.
- Age-related health issues and disabilities can limit older persons' energy, mobility, and cognitive abilities, affecting their ability to actively participate in public life and decision-making processes. Access to healthcare services and accommodations for disabilities are essential to address these challenges.



Judicial and non-judicial mechanisms for elderly to complain and seek redress

Judicial mechanisms for older persons' violations of the right to public life in India include filing complaints with civil courts or approaching human rights commissions. Non-judicial mechanisms involve lodging grievances with government departments or seeking assistance from advocacy organizations specializing in elder rights, promoting redress and accountability.

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