
Measuring Living Standards of Older People Using the Capability Approach

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Assessment of Living Standards

- Income, Wealth, Assets
- Living Standards
- Capability



Sen's Capability Approach

'Capability' describes what individuals are *able* to do and be, and their freedom to pursue the lives they have reason to value.



Qualitative Study

- 143 participants
- Community sampling
 - range of ages over 65, SES, gender, ethnicity, and location
- Semi-structured interviews
- Thematic analysis



Six Living Standards Domains

- physical comfort
- social integration
- contribution to society
- enjoyment
- security
- autonomy



Item Development

Physical Comfort

- I can afford my favourite foods
- I would like to be able to spend more on groceries
- I can afford the home help I need
- I have to do without many things

Social Integration

- I can afford special outings
- I stay home to save money
- I have more than most people
- I can afford to visit people

Item Development

Contribution

- I can afford to give suitable gifts
- I can afford to help people
- I can provide meals for others
- I can support organisations that are important to me

Enjoyment

- I can afford all I need to be happy
- I can afford to do all the things I love
- I can afford luxuries
- I can afford to do the things I enjoy

Item Development

Security

- I have no money worries
- I can pay my bills as soon as they are due
- I have enough money to last my lifetime
- I can save for the future

Autonomy

- I can afford to buy what I like
- My choices are not limited by money
- I can afford the sort of retirement I want
- More money would not make life any easier

Postal Survey Pilot

- Postal Survey Pilot
 - 73 capability items
 - Other measures of living standards, income, education, employment, health, and life satisfaction
- 2000 participants randomly selected
 - 65-100 years old ($M = 73$)
 - 51% female
- 1064 returned questionnaires (59% return rate allowing for those deceased or moved)



Subscales with factor loadings and reliability

Health care: (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$)

I can get all the health care I need (0.56)
I can afford anything I need to remain well (0.79)
I can afford to go to the medical specialist if I need to (0.66)
I can afford all that I need to be healthy (0.76)

Contribution: (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$)

I am able to give others as much as I want (0.84)
I can help people whenever I want (0.52)
I can give as much as I like to charity or to church (0.51)
I can provide for others when I wish (0.76)

Social Integration: (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$)

I am able to take part in any regular activities I want to (0.58)
I am able to travel as much as I would like (0.63)
I am able to visit people whenever I wish (0.75)
I am able to go on special outings (0.55)

Restriction: (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$)

There are things that I would like to buy but cannot afford (0.33)
My choices are limited by money (0.53)
Lack of money stops me from doing things (0.49)
I have to be careful with spending (0.53)
More money would make my life easier (0.44)

Security: (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$)

I have enough money for unexpected costs (0.42)
I have enough money to feel secure about the future (0.49)
I expect to have enough money to last my lifetime (0.90)
I expect a future without money problems (0.53)

Enjoyment: (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$)

I am able to do all the things I love (0.63)
I can have regular treats (0.59)
I am able to follow my interests (0.72)
I can have everything I need to be happy (0.63)

Correlations: Sub-scales, total Capabilities, ELSI Short Form, & other variables

Capabilities Subscale	Health Care	Social Engagement	Security	Contribution	Restriction	Enjoyment	Total Capabilities	Other
Health Care	1						.46**	Income
Social Engagement	.78**	1					.56**	Life Satisfaction
Security	.76**	.72**	1				.35**	Happiness
Contribution	.75**	.78**	.76**	1			.43**	Health
Restriction	-.47**	-.45**	-.53**	-.52**	1		.10**	Age
Enjoyment	.79**	.85**	.73**	.78**	-.45**	1		
ELSI SF	.77**	.76**	.74**	.71**	-.58**	.79**	.85**	

Conclusion

- Variations in choice
- Variations in living standards
- Living standards and health

