

# The nature and prevalence of disability in a Ghanaian community as measured by the Language Independent Functional Evaluation

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The current study uses the Language Independent Functional Evaluation (L.I.F.E.) to evaluate disability in a smaller Ghanaian coastal town to characterize the extent and nature of disability. The L.I.F.E. is a video animated, language free equivalent of the standard 10-item verbal/written Barthel Index functional assessment.

**Methods:** Over a four-month period, the L.I.F.E. survey was given to members of the village of Anomabo in a preliminary survey which consisted of recruitment in an un-controlled manner, followed by a systematic, comprehensive survey of three neighborhood clusters. Basic demographics were also collected, along with the observer's assessment of disability.

**Results:** 541 inhabitants (264 in the preliminary survey and 277 in systematic survey) completed the L.I.F.E. Participants ranged from 7-100 years old (mean age 32.88, s.d. 20.64) and were 55.9% female. In the systematic study, 16.6% of participants had a less than perfect score on the L.I.F.E., indicating some degree of impairment. Significant differences were found between age groups, but not between sexes, the preliminary and systematic survey, and study location ( $\alpha=.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The L.I.F.E. and this study methodology can be used to measure the prevalence of disability in African communities. Disability in this community was higher than the frequently cited estimate of 10%. African policymakers can use the L.I.F.E. to measure disability and thus more rationally allocate resources for medical rehabilitation.

## Introduction

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