

## **Informed Consent for Research with Marginalized Populations**

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Informed consent—if it is truly “informed” and sensitive to local context—is a strong mechanism for protecting participants in research. However, there are inherent constraints in the application of national and international guidelines for informed consent that can and do limit its capacity to safeguard the interests of individuals and communities, including assumptions about voluntary participation, comprehension, and beliefs about decisional capacity. Marginalized populations may be vulnerable to coercion because of their social status or poverty, or because political conditions influence their ability to participate in research voluntarily. Social power and personal trust are key components in the relationship between researchers and individuals participating in their studies. Findings from a study comparing consent to genetic epidemiological research among individuals of African heritage in the U.S. and Nigeria are briefly described to highlight challenges surrounding informed consent to medical research.