

Initial project duration – 34 months – starting from 1 March 2019, new end date 31 December 2022, extended due to COVID-19

Ricardo Rodrigues
Austria

Susan Phillips
Canada

Stefan Fors
Sweden

Gender, Economics, Sociology, Medicine, Health Research

Overview

FutureGEN aims to build evidence on how entwined gender inequalities in health and care-giving/receiving evolve across generations in connection with cultural and social contexts and individual realities, and how identified sex/gender inequalities may evolve in the future. In particular, the main expected results will consist of:

- A scoping review of evidence on the social determinants that contribute to gender differences in health and functioning in old-age.
- A systematic review of methods used to study intersectionality in inequalities in health.
- Cohort trajectories of disability in old-age across regions and a decomposition of their determinants.
- Analysis of the effects of transitions into widowhood on use of different forms of care.
- Cohort trajectories of caregiving and care receiving across several European countries, as well as an analysis of its determinants.
- Qualitative study (semi-structured interviews) on the views of older-people across the three sites (Austria, Canada and Sweden) on the resources necessary to age well.
- A future-looking exercise on the evolution of the determinants of disability and caregiving/care receiving in the future cohorts of older people.
- Analysis of potential bias in the reporting of measures of informal caregiving used in comparative surveys.

Progress to date

The project is on track to achieve its objectives.

Impact of COVID-19

FutureGEN has postponed the PhD workshops from Fall 2020 (in Canada) to Spring 2021 (Canada and Sweden). Projects meetings were postponed or transformed into online meetings. There is a contingency plan in case field work for the qualitative study needs to be delayed.

Team members

	Woman	Man	Other
Gender balance in the whole consortium	7 (64%)	4 (36%)	0 (0%)
Presence of women as lead researchers/PIs	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	0 (0%)
Gender Experts in the team	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)
Subsequent team members trained (Gender equality and/or IGAR)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	0 (0%)

Contribution to the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The UN Sustainable Development Goals have placed inequalities (i.e. differences between groups, primarily gender and age) at the heart of public policies, as they aim to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (SDG 5) and “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” (SDG 3). Currently, however, there are still marked gender differences in health, as women live longer than men, but live with a greater portion of their lives in poor health. Clearly a gender gap remains in the likelihood of achieving a healthy life.

Furthermore, SDG 5 also calls for tackling related gender inequalities, namely in care provided by others, by valuing unpaid and domestic work and sharing it equally within households. Compared to men, women of all ages still shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid work, particularly caring for older people.

The research in the frame of FutureGEN has highlighted different pathways into disability by sex/gender (SDG 3 and SDG 5) and on the impact of widowhood on access to services by sex/gender (SDG 5).

Differences/inequalities between women and men highlighted by the project

FutureGEN has identified sex differences in health outcomes, namely disability as well as in the provision and use of different types of care by older people. Beyond these differences between women and men, the goal is to also analyze within group differences.

Positive impact of the project on gender equality/scientific evidence on gender in the field

Papers in the submission process will include:

- Novel insights into cohort trajectories into disability in old-age for several regions in Europe by sex/gender.
- Novel findings on transitions to widowhood and impact on care by sex/gender.
- Novel insights into cohort trajectories of caregiving for several regions in Europe by sex/gender.
- Assessment of gender inequalities in use of care among a sample of Canadian older people.

Socio-economic impact; involvement of policy makers/civil society

The integration of two intertwined gendered issues – health and care – that have mostly remained separated to date and which the FutureGEN research team is in a unique position to accomplish, will lead to deep understanding of interconnections between health and care and of how to tackle gender inequalities in both areas. Novel insights will be generated by using an intersectional approach, coupled with cumulative advantages and disadvantages over the course of a life, and social determinants of health as transversal theoretical frameworks to integrated health and care.

Therefore, FutureGEN is expected to have a direct societal impact on effectiveness of public policies. Its dynamic approach to gender inequalities in health and care across time and place (i.e. countries) will shed light on the impact of past and current policies and societal changes. It will also allow public policies to proactively mitigate future drivers of gender inequalities. This will allow for better targeting of public policies across different groups and move well beyond the essentialism of assuming all women are the same and different from all men. This will ultimately benefit all older adults.

More concretely, FutureGEN Sounding Board is composed of policy makers and high-ranking officials in organization such as UNECE, WHO Europe and OECD. They have had regular meetings, a webinar has been organised by the OECD on the project’s early findings, these findings have been further disseminated through the members of the Board of Directors of the European Centre, which comprise several policy-makers and representatives of governments.

Two policy events have been held so far:

- On the launch of the Data Navigator tool aimed at academics and policy-makers:
<https://www.euro.centre.org/events/detail/4059>.
- On a joint policy event with the GENPATH project (also funded through the GENDER-Net Plus programme):
<https://www.euro.centre.org/events/detail/4194>.