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Overview

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 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” (SDG5) and “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” (SDG3). Currently, however, there are still marked gender differences in health, as women live longer than men, but live a greater portion of their lives in poor health. Clearly a gender gap remains in the likelihood of achieving a healthy life.

SDG5 also calls for tackling related gender inequalities, namely in care provided to 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.

FutureGEN aimed 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.

Project outcomes

In particular, the main outcomes are :

- i) A systematic review of methods used to study intersectionality in inequalities in health;
- ii) Cohort trajectories of disability in old-age across regions and a decomposition of their determinants;
- iii) Analysis of the effects of transitions into widowhood on use of different forms of care;
- iv) Cohort trajectories of caregiving across several European countries, as well as an analysis of its determinants;
- v) 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;
- vi) Review of the literature on the contribution of gendered differences in socioeconomic conditions to the sex-gap in old-age disabilities.
- vii) An analysis of the correlation of individual gender norms with caregiving behavior of women and men across Europe and how this is moderated by public policies;
- viii) An analysis of gender differences in mortality across cohorts for a number of European and North American countries.
- ix) Analysis of potential bias in the reporting of measures of informal caregiving used in comparative surveys.

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 research has highlighted different pathways into disability by sex/gender (SDG 5 and SDG 3) 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. These inequalities were analyzed across time and cohorts. FutureGEN also went beyond these differences between women and men to analyze within group differences, that is, to analyse gender.

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

Papers in the submission process or already submitted 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
- Review of methods for study of intersectionality in health inequalities, and of its strengths and limitations.
- Review of the literature on the contribution of gendered differences in socioeconomic conditions to the sex-gap in old-age disabilities.
- Novel findings on sex and socioeconomic disparities in trends in disability-free life-expectancy in Sweden.
- Novel insights into the role played by cohort effects in shaping the changing patterns of sex disparities in old age mortality between 1919 and 2020, in USA, Canada, Italy, Austria, and Sweden.
- Novel findings on cohort changes in the probability to provide informal care inside and outside the household across Europe.
- Novel findings on gender differences in perceptions and actual resources needed to age well, based on primary data in Austria, Sweden and Canada.
- Novel findings on gender differences in the perception of health and whether this is also a gendered indicator.

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

FutureGEN integration of two intertwined gendered issues – health and care – which have mostly remained separated to date has led to deep understanding of interconnections between health and care and of how to tackle gender inequalities in both areas. Novel insights have been 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) shed light on the impact of past and current policies and societal changes. It also allowed public policies to proactively mitigate future drivers of gender inequalities. This allowed for better targeting of public policies across different groups and moving 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 was 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 organized by the OECD on the project's early findings, and 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.