



GENDER MATTERS

A Cross-Cutting Priority

Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority of PAAR NET. Across the project, we embedded gender-sensitive approaches in research, participation, data analysis, and outcomes.

Looking with a gender lens on each White Paper, we surfaced concrete evidence of how gender shapes participation, access, and equity. Together, these findings show that meaningful change requires recognising gender not as a side issue but as a structural factor influencing every dimension of ageing and participation.

01

White Paper 1

Health, Care & Support (WG1)

Through the gender lens of this White Paper, we learn that achieving fairness in health, care, and support depends on making participation intersectional and sensitive to power dynamics. WG1 stresses the importance of inclusive language, challenging stereotypes, and continually reflecting on *who participates, how, and why*.

These practices are crucial for revealing gendered inequities in health and care systems. Relational, co-created approaches, such as group-based programmes with older women, show how age and gender interact to shape wellbeing, reduce loneliness, and strengthen resilience.



WP1 highlights three key gender insights:



Intersectionality as practice:

Participation should be designed and reported with awareness of multiple identities and vulnerabilities, providing the basis for detecting gendered differences in access and outcomes.



Language & stereotypes:

Inclusive language and counter-stereotyping are essential to avoid reproducing bias that can silence or misrepresent women's experiences.



Challenging ageism:

Participatory approaches help contest ageist narratives, creating space to see how ageism and gender interact in practice.

02

White Paper 2

Community & Place (WG2)

Through the gender lens of this White Paper, we learn that older women are consistently among the most excluded, particularly when other factors such as migrant background, indigeneity, or disability compound disadvantage.

This reality demands targeted positive action in both research and policy. WG2 makes clear that community participation only works when gender is recognised as a key factor in inclusion and exclusion.

It highlights how older women from migrant backgrounds face distinct barriers in accessing healthcare, social services, and decision-making compared with men or native-born peers. It also demonstrates that culturally tailored methods and strong local networks are essential for meaningful engagement.

By taking gender seriously, inclusive approaches ensure that the voices of older women, older migrants, and older adults with disabilities influence policies and outcomes.



WG2 highlights three key gender insights:



Persistent exclusion:

Older women face structural exclusion, intensified when combined with migration, indigeneity, or disability, requiring deliberate and positive action.



What works:

Culturally tailored tools, combined with strong local networks of families, communities, and institutions, drive inclusion and well-being. Ignoring intersectionality, including gender, leads to oversimplified and ineffective solutions.



Inclusive decision-making:

Participatory methods amplify the voices of older women, older migrants, and older adults

03

White Paper 3

Technology & Innovation (WG3)

Through the gender lens of this White Paper, we learn that technology is never neutral; gender directly shapes digital participation. WG3 shows that needs and expectations are shaped by gender alongside culture, language, and socioeconomic background. It critiques digital ageism and promotes participatory, citizen-science approaches so older adults co-create technological solutions. Overcoming the divide requires more than access to devices: it calls for co-design, intergenerational learning, and tailored digital literacy initiatives that support women to participate fully and confidently.

One striking example comes from Türkiye. Among adults aged 64–75, 49.8% of men used the internet in 2023 compared with only 32.7% of women, up from 34.9% vs 20.4% in 2020.

This persistent gap, a clear reminder to “design for the gap”, illustrates how gender intersects with income, education, and geography to deepen exclusion.



WG3 highlights two key gender insights:



Intersectional barriers:

Gendered digital gaps combine with inequalities of education, income, and rurality, showing why one-size-fits-all solutions do not work.



Participatory fix:

Co-design, intergenerational learning, and practical digital literacy programmes (such as the *Digital Inclusiveness Project for 65+*) are effective ways to close gendered divides in both use and confidence.

04

White Paper 4

Synthesis & Quality Criteria (WG4)

Through the gender lens of this White Paper, we learn that quality in participation requires being feminist-informed and power-aware. WG4 reminds us that participatory research is rooted in traditions that challenge who produces knowledge and whose voices count. As it states directly:

“Participatory research confronts power dynamics and follows the traditions from which it emerged, such as feminist research and civil rights movements. It seeks to challenge the production and ownership of knowledge.”

WG4 highlights three key gender insights:.

- **Empowerment:**
Older adults, including women often excluded, must be treated as co-researchers with influence over design, analysis, and outcomes.
- **Reflexivity:**
Researchers must critically reflect on their own roles, assumptions, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.
- **Equity:**
Participation should address not only age but also intersecting inequalities of gender, race, class, and disability.

A powerful example is the **Uncertain Futures project** in Manchester (UK). This co-produced art–research initiative is centred on women aged 50+ from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. It exposed the economic invisibility of unpaid caregiving and volunteering, highlighted barriers to paid work, and documented how gender, age, race, and disability compound disadvantage. Crucially, it demonstrated that participatory work must not stop at producing insights: it must shape decisions, influence policy, and secure more certain futures for older women.

Closing Reflection

Across all four White Papers, the evidence is clear: gender is not, nor should be, an add-on but a decisive factor shaping participation, access, and equity in later life. Embedding gender-sensitive, intersectional approaches transforms participation from tokenism into genuine influence, ensuring that older women's experiences, insights, and leadership shape policies, practices, and futures that are fairer for everyone.

TO FIND OUT MORE AND ACCESS OUR RESOURCES:

VISIT <https://paar-net.eu/>

