

A LIFE-COURSE APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY: ADVANCING THE RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT OF OLDER WOMEN

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Aparna Mehrotra
Director, UN System Coordination Division, and
Senior Executive Advisor on Ageing
aparna.mehrotra@unwomen.org

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Background

Demographic shifts including population ageing, with all its concomitant challenges and opportunities, constitutes a defining feature of the 21st century. By 2030, the global population aged 60 and older will reach 1.4 billion, representing approximately 16.5% of the projected 8.5 billion global population—a 34% increase from 2019—with nearly 80% residing in developing countries. By 2050, this figure will climb to 2.1 billion, accounting for around 21.6% of the estimated 9.7 billion global population.¹ In 2020, for the first time in history, people aged 60 years or over outnumbered children under the age of five, a trend that continues to accelerate.² Populations are ageing and living longer, and whether countries have already advanced or have only started along that path, projections show that this global trend will characterize the demographic makeup of future societies.

Ageing is also a deeply gendered phenomenon. Women live longer than men in all regions by an average of five years, leading to a higher proportion of older women globally. Currently, women make up 54% of those over 60, rising to 62% of those over 80. The share of older women in the total female population is also rising: 27% of all women today are over 50, a figure projected to increase to nearly 35% by 2050, with women over 65 accounting for 17.8%.³

However, longer life expectancy does not translate into greater security or well-being for older women. Persistent gender inequalities in education, employment, and caregiving responsibilities reinforce economic and social insecurity in later years. In 2022, only 63.3% of women aged 25 to 54 were employed, compared to 91.9% of men. When employed, women earned, on average, 20% less. Career interruptions and the prevalence of informal jobs, often due to unpaid care responsibilities, further reduce their lifetime earnings and retirement savings, resulting in fewer women qualifying for pensions and those who do receiving lower benefits than men. In 2023, just 52.4% of the global population had access to at least one social protection benefit, leaving 2 billion women and girls unprotected.⁴

With insufficient savings and weak social protections, older women struggle with financial insecurity, inadequate healthcare, and limited economic independence. Age discrimination further compounds these disadvantages, restricting their participation in the workforce, access to public services, and ability to contribute meaningfully to society. These barriers undermine their dignity, and erode their physical, emotional, and financial well-being.

Despite the challenges, the demographic shift also presents opportunities for labour markets, healthcare systems, and social protection frameworks. Increasing longevity drives the need for robust normative frameworks that institutionalize evolving standards of decency and guide the development of age-inclusive policies, economic security measures, and a minimum support infrastructure. These efforts must ensure effective, holistic, and dignified long-term care, while also expanding opportunities for older women to remain active economic and social contributors. Given that older women face a "dual jeopardy" of age discrimination and cumulative gender disparities, adopting a comprehensive rights-based life-course approach becomes all the more imperative. This

¹[UN DESA Pop Facts](#)

²[UN Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action 2021–2030](#), pp. 2-3.

³[Investing in Equality HelpAge International](#), p. 6

⁴[Gender Snapshot 2024](#)

approach holds the potential to address—and where possible, reverse—the cumulative disadvantages experienced by older women, preserve and restore their individual and collective dignity and visibility, and recognize their multifaceted and intrinsic value through the implementation of supportive policies and practices.

Women, including older women, hold intrinsic value, contribute to the economy, and maintain the fabric of families and societies *inter alia* through caregiving and community support. Their situations, potentials, and perspectives must be addressed both normatively and operationally, as standalone policies and programmes and by integrating their perspectives into all other policies and programmes.

UN Women with its mandate for gender equality and the empowerment of women of all ages is well placed to undertake this task, integrating it into its next strategic plan. This effort aligns with the Beijing+30 Action Agenda, which prioritizes freedom from poverty, full and equal decision making power and climate justice—key actions for securing the rights and well-being of older women.⁵ It also reinforces the Secretary-General's UN 2.0 vision, particularly in foresight to anticipate demographic shifts and behavioral science to counter age and gender biases, ensuring a holistic and inclusive framework for ageing and gender equality.⁶

⁵ The Beijing+30 Action Agenda identifies six priority areas: (1) A digital revolution, (2) Freedom from poverty, (3) Zero violence, (4) Full and equal decision-making power, (5) Peace and security, and (6) Climate justice. This paper aligns particularly with freedom from poverty (Action 2) by prioritizing economic security through social protection, full and equal decision-making power (Action 4) by promoting older women's leadership, and climate resilience (Action 6) by recognizing older women's role in climate resilience.

⁶ The UN 2.0 vision focuses on five transformative areas: (1) Data, (2) Innovation, (3) Strategic Foresight, (4) Digital and (5) Behavioral Science. This effort particularly aligns with foresight (anticipating demographic shifts and its policy implications), behavioral science (to design interventions that work with, rather than against, human behavior, reducing inequality and exclusion), and data and digital approaches (strengthening data collection and expanding older women's access to services).

Older Women: Trends and Challenges

- **Longevity and Population Imbalance:** Women tend to outlive men, resulting in a higher proportion of older women, particularly beyond age 80, where there are more than 10 women for every 6 men.⁷ On average, women live five years longer than men but often face more years in ill health or with disabilities.
- **Educational Disparities:** Older women especially in less developed regions experience significantly higher illiteracy rates than men, limiting their access to health services, employment, and social protections. These disparities contribute to economic insecurity and lower digital literacy, further marginalizing older women in an increasingly digital world.⁸
- **Labour Market Inequalities:** Women encounter persistent barriers to employment and economic security throughout their lives, resulting in lower earnings and financial precarity in old age. Globally, labour force participation rates diverge by an average of 30 percentage points between men and women aged 20 to 64, with disparities worsening as they age.⁹ Age discrimination often forces older workers out of the labour force, despite evidence that mixed-age workplaces enhance productivity and that older workers bring valuable skills and experience.¹⁰ In low-income countries, 24.9% of women are out of the labour force compared to 16.6% of men, limiting their ability to save and accumulate pension benefits.¹¹
- **Higher Poverty Rates:** The economic impact of lower workforce participation worsens due to gendered pension gaps and discriminatory social protection systems. Women in OECD countries receive, on average, 27% lower annual pension payments than men, reflecting lower lifetime earnings and career interruptions from caregiving.¹² Only 26.3% of working-age women globally are covered by pension schemes, compared to 38.7% of men, with the gap widening in lower-middle-income countries (8.1% for women vs. 20.8% for men).¹³ The reliance on continuous formal employment for pension systems further exacerbates financial insecurity for older women.
- **Unpaid Care Work:** Women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and family care, contributing 16.4 billion hours annually—equivalent to 2 billion full-time jobs.¹⁴ Globally, women perform 2.5 times more unpaid care work than men, continuing into older age. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 57% of older women (60+) reported increased unpaid care work, highlighting the persistent gendered nature of caregiving.¹⁵ Despite often being seen as care recipients, many older women provide essential care. In the early phases, they are primarily responsible for childcare, often outside formal employment. In later stages, as populations age, this burden evolves into providing long-term care for ageing family

⁷ [World Social Report 2023](#), p. 17

⁸ [MIPAA](#) para 36

⁹ [World Social Report 2023](#), p. 68

¹⁰ [ILO How to adapt labour markets to changing demographics](#)

¹¹ [A/79/157](#), para 12

¹² [UN Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action 2021–2030](#), p. 5

¹³ [UNW Advocacy Brief Older Women: Inequality at the Intersection of Age and Gender](#) p. 3

¹⁴ [World Social Report 2023](#), p. 66

¹⁵ [UNW Advocacy Brief Older Women: Inequality at the Intersection of Age and Gender](#) p. 5

members. "In the final phase of the transition, the demand for care services intensifies, as older women serve as both primary caregivers and care recipients. This care continuum, which remains largely unrecognized and uncompensated, reinforces the cycle of gendered economic insecurity."¹⁶

- **Health Vulnerabilities:** Older women experience higher rates of chronic illnesses and disabilities than men, yet they often lack adequate access to healthcare and long-term care services. They also face heightened vulnerability to climate change impacts, experiencing disproportionate health risks, including higher rates of chronic respiratory issues due to air pollution, and increased mortality from extreme heat events. Furthermore, in cases of forced displacement, older women face increased risks due to the lack of traditional support systems and exclusion from humanitarian responses, further exacerbating their health challenges.¹⁷
- **Increased Risk of Abuse:** One in six people aged 60+ experienced abuse in community settings in 2020, while two out of three employees in nursing homes and long-term care facilities admitted to committing abuse against older persons in the same year.¹⁸ With global ageing trends, rates of elder abuse are expected to rise, leading to serious health, financial, and social consequences for older persons and their communities. The ageing process reduces the ability to heal, meaning older victims of abuse may never fully recover physically or emotionally. Older women often face barriers to seeking help due to stigma and economic dependence.
- **Social Exclusion:** Older women are disproportionately affected by social isolation, neglect, and age discrimination, particularly those living alone or in institutional settings. Older women are more than twice as likely as older men to live alone, increasing their risk of economic insecurity, limited access to social services, and psychological distress. Surveys indicate that older persons report lower life satisfaction, fewer social interactions, and less social support than working-age adults. Many also experience a lack of agency or control over their lives and feel they are not treated with dignity or respect. Across Europe, more than one in three people aged 65+ reported being a target of ageism.¹⁹
- **Intersectional Barriers:** Older women who face discrimination based on race, disability, or socioeconomic status encounter compounded disadvantages, making it harder to access healthcare, social protections, and economic opportunities. These challenges intensify in humanitarian crises and forced displacement, where older women often remain excluded from aid, social services, and protection measures, increasing their vulnerability to poverty, violence, and neglect.
- **Rural Vulnerabilities:** In many developing countries and transitional economies, ageing populations are more prominent in rural areas due to the exodus of young adults. Older individuals may lack traditional family support and adequate financial resources. Policies and programs for food security and agricultural production must address the implications of

¹⁶ [UN Women Caring for the Future Brief 2025](#), p. 5

¹⁷ [UNW Advocacy Brief Older Women: Inequality at the Intersection of Age and Gender](#) p. 3

¹⁸ [UNW Advocacy Brief Older Women: Inequality at the Intersection of Age and Gender](#) p. 4

¹⁹ [World Social Report 2023](#), p. 87

rural ageing. Older women in rural areas face heightened economic vulnerability, particularly when their work is unpaid, and they depend on others for support and survival.

Older Women: Opportunities and Positive Contributions

- **Productive and Experienced Workforce:** Older workers, including older women, bring valuable skills and expertise to the workforce. By adapting workplaces, eliminating age- and gender-based discrimination, and supporting flexible work arrangements, countries can better harness their contributions. Initiatives such as phased retirement, skills retraining, and return-to-work programs "returnships" help retain valuable institutional knowledge and facilitate the transfer of expertise.²⁰ Studies show that diverse, mixed-age teams enhance workplace performance and innovation, making them a strategic asset rather than a liability. Countries like Sweden and the Netherlands, which have high labour force participation for both young and older workers, demonstrate that inclusive employment policies strengthen entire economies rather than benefiting one group at the expense of another.²¹
- **Economic Growth:** In the initial stages of population ageing, a rising proportion of the working-age population can create a demographic dividend—a window of opportunity to boost per capita economic growth. Realizing this potential requires sustained investment in education, health, and decent work.²² However, as populations continue to age, ensuring long-term economic benefits depends on fully utilizing the experience and capabilities of older workers, particularly women. Studies show that older women upskill just as successfully as younger workers when given continuous learning opportunities.²³ Expanding pathways for older women to remain in or re-enter the workforce—through flexible work arrangements, upskilling programs, and supportive policies—can strengthen their financial security while fueling economic growth. Measures such as access to affordable and quality care services—are crucial to ensuring gender-equal economic participation rates and gains.²⁴
- **"Silver Economy":** The silver economy encompasses the goods, services, and employment opportunities driven by ageing populations. Older women are both workers and consumers in the silver economy, yet their economic contributions often go unrecognized. Studies show that start-ups led by older individuals (50+) have a 70% success rate, compared to 28% for younger entrepreneurs, underscoring the strong potential of older entrepreneurs.²⁵ However, financial and technological barriers continue to limit their full participation. Investing in gender-responsive and intergenerationally inclusive technology—such as AI-driven healthcare, digital banking for older women, and age-friendly innovations—can expand access to financial services and entrepreneurship. Strengthening small business funding, mentorship, and digital literacy initiatives will be key to unlocking their potential in this rapidly growing sector.²⁶

²⁰ [World Social Report 2023](#), V, p 64

²¹ [ILO How to adapt labour markets to changing demographics](#)

²² [World Social Report 2023](#), p. 4

²³ [ILO How to adapt labour markets to changing demographics](#)

²⁴ [UN Women Caring for the Future Brief 2025](#), p 4

²⁵ [ILO How to adapt labour markets to changing demographics](#)

²⁶ [A/73/213](#), para 51

- **Growing Financial Influence and Empowerment:** Older women are emerging as the "new face of wealth" in global financial markets, controlling a rapidly expanding share of retail financial assets. They currently hold approximately one-third of all retail financial assets in the European Union and United States, a share projected to grow to 40 to 45 percent by 2030. This significant financial growth, which saw wealth controlled by women increase by 51 percent globally between 2018 and 2023 (compared to a 43 percent increase in global financial wealth generally), is driven by social, economic, demographic shifts and a remarkable rise in financial confidence. These trends position older women as increasingly empowered decision-makers with full financial autonomy. Despite this burgeoning affluence, an estimated 53 percent of assets controlled by women currently remain unmanaged, compared to just 45 percent of assets controlled by men. This represents a vast multi-trillion-dollar opportunity. Older women are discerning, long-term investors who prioritise long-term financial security and specific goals such as ensuring retirement assets last, managing healthcare and long-term care costs, and maintaining their lifestyle. For financial institutions, recognising these unique financial behaviours and preferences, and adapting services with tailored, needs-based strategies, is crucial. This approach not only enhances the economic security and financial empowerment of older women but also effectively taps into a significant growth driver within the evolving "silver economy".²⁷
- **Intergenerational Solidarity:** Older people contribute to the economy through formal and informal work, consumption, intergenerational wealth transfers, and tax contributions.²⁸ Many older women serve as primary caregivers for grandchildren or provide social and emotional support within families, yet their caregiving remains largely undervalued in economic terms. As populations age, more countries are introducing policies that professionalize care work and offer economic incentives to caregivers. Expanding intergenerational housing models, caregiving support, and financial policies that recognize unpaid care can strengthen social networks and create sustainable caregiving systems.
- **Leadership, Civic Participation, and Decision-Making:** Older women play a vital role in social justice efforts, community leadership, and governance. Many lead grassroots initiatives, advocate for policy reforms, and contribute to intergenerational knowledge-sharing. Yet, systemic barriers like ageism and digital exclusion limit their representation in formal leadership and decision-making roles. In humanitarian settings, older women's voices are rarely included in decision-making, despite their critical role in community resilience and enduring peace.²⁹ Expanding access to leadership training, digital literacy, and lifelong learning can strengthen their participation in governance and civic life. Countries that actively integrate older women into policy discussions and governance structures benefit from their expertise, fostering stronger social cohesion and sustainable development.³⁰
- **Older Women as Key Actors in Sustainability:** Older women play a vital role in climate resilience, agriculture, conservation, and disaster response, particularly as key contributors

²⁷ [The new face of wealth: The rise of the female investor](#), (McKinsey 2025)

²⁸ [A/79/157](#), para 10

²⁹ [Norwegian Refugee Council: Improving Participation and Protection of Displaced Women and Girls](#)

³⁰ [MIPAA](#) para 22

to food security and sustainable farming in rural communities. They preserve indigenous knowledge, manage water resources, and lead community-based adaptation strategies, making them essential to climate resilience.³¹ Yet, ageism often excludes them from policymaking, neglecting their needs and undervaluing their wisdom, strength, and resourcefulness.³² Recognizing their contributions through inclusive policies and providing climate adaptation resources—such as drought-resistant crops, financial incentives for sustainable farming, and disaster risk education—can enhance their leadership in sustainability. Strengthening their land rights, ensuring equal access to economic resources, promoting their role in climate governance, and assessing risks in humanitarian emergencies will further bolster community resilience.³³

³¹ [MIPAA](#) para 32

³² [A/79/157](#), para 42

³³ [MIPAA](#) pp. 32, 33

Normative Context

Efforts to secure the rights and empowerment of older women are grounded in a series of mandates. Below is a chronological overview of the most significant instruments and resolutions shaping this normative agenda.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995

The Beijing Platform for Action (BDPFA) was adopted in 1995 as the most comprehensive global policy framework for achieving gender equality and empowering women. It was the first international instrument to explicitly integrate ageing as a demographic trend with clear implications for women's rights, placing older women within the broader context of social justice and sustainable development. It remains a cornerstone in the recognition of women's rights throughout the life course.³⁴

The Platform identifies twelve critical areas of concern, including poverty, health, and the economy, all of which address key challenges facing older women. It highlights the importance of rights-based and gender-responsive policymaking and calls on governments to mainstream age- and gender-sensitive actions into national strategies.

BDPFA continues to serve as a foundational reference point, reaffirming the indivisibility of women's human rights across all stages of life and the need for transformative action to dismantle structural barriers.

- It underscores the disproportionate impact of ageing and care responsibilities on women, noting that more than half of the global population aged 60 and above are women, the majority of whom live in developing countries. The Platform emphasizes that caregiving—whether for children, the elderly, or the ill—continues to fall disproportionately on women due to structural inequalities in the division of paid and unpaid work.
- The BDPFA takes a life-course approach, affirming that discrimination accumulates over time and particularly affects older women in areas such as health, income security, and social participation. It calls for increased attention to older women's economic rights, including access to employment, pensions, and social protection, and for gender-responsive reforms to address the gender pay and pension gaps.
- It calls on States to take measures enabling older women's active participation in all aspects of life and decision-making, and to develop gender-specific programmes for healthy and active ageing. The Platform encourages governments to ensure full access to affordable, quality healthcare and to support the autonomy and dignity of older women, especially those who are physically or economically dependent.
- The Platform also highlights the risks of social isolation and poverty in old age due to inadequate social security systems that do not account for women's discontinuous work histories. It stresses the importance of addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged older women, including widows, rural women, refugees, and those with disabilities.

³⁴ BDPFA

In reaffirming women's human rights across the life cycle, the Beijing Platform for Action makes an enduring contribution to global efforts aimed at recognizing, protecting, and advancing the rights of older women.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), 2002

Adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) is the first global agreement to recognize the broad societal impacts of ageing and the need for gender-responsive approaches.³⁵ It identifies three priority directions:

- Older persons and development
- Advancing health and well-being into old age
- Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

MIPAA remains a foundational resource, but the absence of a legally binding convention has limited its enforcement. As ageing populations grow rapidly, implementing gender-responsive policies in line with MIPAA has become increasingly urgent to ensure the rights and dignity of older persons, particularly older women.

The MIPAA represents a key commitment by governments to building a society for all ages and serves as a critical resource for policymaking across governments, civil society organizations, and other actors.

- It underscores the necessity of integrating a gender perspective into all policies and programs, acknowledging the distinct and disproportionate challenges older women face due to lifelong gender inequalities. By emphasizing the cumulative impact of gender-based discrimination, MIPAA highlights the specific vulnerabilities of older women while recognizing their potential as key contributors to socio-economic development.
- The plan advocates for a life-course approach, recognizing that inequalities in education, employment, and health accumulate over time, shaping older women's experiences and needs. It also stresses the importance of participation, urging that older persons be actively involved in shaping policies that affect them, ensuring their rights, voices, and lived experiences are at the center of decision-making processes.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 27, 2010

Adopted by the CEDAW Committee in 2010, General Recommendation No. 27 (GR27) is the first international human rights instrument to comprehensively address the rights of older women. It interprets the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a living instrument, applicable throughout the entire life cycle, and calls for the elimination of age- and gender-based discrimination in law, policy, and practice.³⁶

³⁵ [MIPAA](#)

³⁶ [CEDAW/C/GC/27](#)

Key provisions include:

- Recognition of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination: GR27 underscores that older women experience compounded discrimination on the basis of sex, age, and other factors such as disability, ethnicity, migration status, and rural location.
- Legal and policy obligations: States parties are called upon to adopt age- and gender-sensitive laws, ensure access to non-contributory pensions, prohibit violence against older women (including in institutions), and guarantee access to affordable, quality healthcare and lifelong education.
- Data and accountability: The recommendation stresses the need for data disaggregated by age and sex, and for the inclusion of older women's experiences in States parties' periodic reports to the Committee.
- Economic rights and participation: It calls for measures to promote equal access to pensions and employment, including the elimination of discriminatory retirement policies and stereotypes that undermine older women's participation in public life.

GR27 remains a critical normative milestone, laying the groundwork for stronger legal frameworks and policy coherence in advancing the rights of older women. It also reinforces the need for a dedicated international legal instrument to address existing protection gaps.

Founding Resolution of UN Women, 2010

Adopted by the General Assembly in 2010, resolution A/RES/64/289 established UN Women to unify and strengthen system-wide efforts on gender equality and women's empowerment, grounded in existing international norms and mandates.³⁷

Resolution 64/289 affirms that UN Women's work is anchored in the Charter of the United Nations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and relevant UN instruments and resolutions that uphold women's rights.

- The resolution emphasizes the **principle of universality**, mandating UN Women to provide guidance and support to all Member States across regions and development contexts—at their request—on issues related to gender equality, women's rights, and gender mainstreaming.
- It underscores the importance of **reliable, disaggregated data**, requiring that information used by the Entity must be verifiable and disaggregated by both sex and age, to ensure that the specific realities of diverse groups, including older women, are accurately reflected in programming and reporting.

³⁷ [A/RES/64/289* Founding Resolution](#)

- The Entity was also tasked with ensuring greater system-wide coherence and accountability for gender equality across the UN, through both its normative support and operational activities at the global, regional, and country levels.

UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), 2020

The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) was established by General Assembly resolution 75/131 in 2020 to foster international collaboration across sectors to improve the lives of older persons.³⁸ It emphasizes health, dignity, and equality throughout the life course and aligns ageing policy with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The resolution affirms the importance of creating inclusive societies that recognize older persons as agents of change and contributors to sustainable development, while addressing the systemic barriers they face, including ageism, gender inequality, and inadequate access to care and services.

- The Decade calls on Member States and the UN system to promote policies that support integrated, person-centered health services; inclusive social protection; and opportunities for active participation of older persons, especially older women who often face compounded disadvantages.
- It highlights the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on older persons and the need for human rights-based responses that address isolation, health access, social exclusion, and age-based discrimination.
- The resolution also tasks the World Health Organization with leading implementation in partnership with UN entities including UN Women, placing gender equality at the heart of healthy ageing efforts.

Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing - Report of the Secretary-General, Jul 2024

Issued in July 2024, the Secretary-General's report (A/79/157) outlines key priorities for ageing and development, calling for intergenerational solidarity and gender-responsive implementation of MIPAA.³⁹

- The report highlights the increasing caregiving burden on women and the urgent need to expand social protections and recognizes the diverse contributions of caregivers, from family members to professional. The report further notes the growing inequalities among older women, driven by lifelong gender-based discrimination.
- The importance of lifelong learning is emphasized as a key strategy to address cumulative disparities, particularly for women.

³⁸ [A/RES/75/131 UN Decade of Healthy Ageing](#)

³⁹ [A/79/157 SG Report](#)

- The report calls for a gender responsive approach to pension reform, acknowledging the persistent gender pension gap and its long-term consequences on older women's economic security.
- The report notes that the jobs gap between genders is smaller in high-income countries but more pronounced in lower-middle and low-income countries.

Recommendations for Member States from the SG Report

- Recognize the role of intergenerational relations in promoting social cohesion and shaping an individual's life course through the transfer of experiences, knowledge, resources, and support.
- Update economic indicators to reflect the diverse contributions of older persons, including informal labor and unpaid care work, and to capture the potential of extended longevity.
- Strengthen family support policies by implementing social protection programs that acknowledge the evolving role of families in caregiving and economic security.
- Enhance representation of older persons in global discussions by encouraging Member States to include older persons' representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly and other UN-led processes.
- Apply a life-course approach to health policies to promote healthy behaviors from early life to old age, reducing non-communicable diseases and extending healthy life expectancy.

General Assembly Resolution 78/324 and the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, Aug 2024

Adopted by the General Assembly in August 2024, resolution 78/324 concludes the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing and affirms the need for strengthened international frameworks to protect older persons' rights.⁴⁰

The resolution:

- Recognizes the completion of the OEWG's mandate, affirming that its work has provided a comprehensive analysis of gaps in the international human rights framework for older persons.
- Urges UN bodies to further consider and act upon the recommendations of Decision 14/1, reinforcing the need to strengthen international protection mechanisms for older persons.
- Calls for a high-level meeting during the 79th session of the General Assembly, where Member States will exchange views and define next steps on the challenges and opportunities related to the rights and well-being of older persons.

⁴⁰ [A/RES/78/324 Consideration of Decision 14/1 of the OEWG on Ageing](#)

Key Implications

- With the OEWG's work concluded, the resolution signals a move towards concrete policy decisions at the General Assembly level, potentially advancing the discussion on a legally binding instrument.
- The resolution affirms the urgent need for strengthened human rights mechanisms to address legal, economic, and social vulnerabilities among older persons, particularly older women.
- The high-level meeting presents a critical moment for advocacy, ensuring that gender considerations and the voices of older women remain central in future policy discussions.

Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing - General Assembly Resolution 79/147, Dec 2024

Adopted during the seventy-ninth session of the UN General Assembly in December 2024, resolution 79/147 reaffirms the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), and emphasizes the need for strengthened global, national, and intergenerational action on ageing.⁴¹ It represents the most comprehensive UN resolution to date on ageing and explicitly recognizes the gendered nature of ageing, with a strong focus on the rights and dignity of older women.

- The resolution acknowledges the disproportionate impact of ageing-related vulnerabilities on older women, including in humanitarian crises, long-term care settings, and economic insecurity. It calls on Member States to mainstream older women's needs into poverty eradication, health, employment, and care policies.
- It urges Member States to adopt a life-course, rights-based approach to ageing, address intersecting forms of discrimination—including ageism and gender inequality—and ensure older persons' full participation in political, social, and economic life.
- The resolution concludes the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, highlights the need to close protection gaps in the current international human rights system, and encourages entities including UN Women to mainstream the situation of older women across their mandates.

General Assembly Resolution 79/226 – QCPR, Dec 2024

The General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/79/226) on quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system addresses the needs of

⁴¹ [A/RES/79/147 Follow up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing](#)

vulnerable populations and has several elements that align with the issues concerning the rights of older women.⁴²

Key provisions and reaffirmations within the resolution that relate to these concerns include:

- The resolution recognises that, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, vulnerable people must be empowered, including older persons.
- The resolution acknowledges the significance of population dynamics in shaping the world for current and future generations. It recognises that demographic diversity, including variations in population growth, changing age structures, urbanization and international migration, will continue to have a profound impact.
 - Requests the United Nations development system to support Member States in responding to demographic trends and realities, such as rapid population growth, declining birth rates, and ageing populations.
 - Directs the UN development system to assist in addressing the interlinkages between population issues and development across all regions, in line with national priorities, and taking into account the needs of women and children.
 - Emphasises the importance of building capacity and strengthening statistical systems in programme countries to better understand and respond to demographic changes.
- The resolution directs the United Nations development system to strengthen its focus on supporting programme countries in developing national capacities for the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographical location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
- The resolution requests the United Nations development system to continue to support programme countries in developing and implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including social protection floors, with substantial coverage for the poor and the vulnerable by 2030.
- The resolution reaffirms that promoting gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls is of fundamental importance and has a multiplier effect for achieving sustained and inclusive economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. It calls upon all entities of the United Nations development system to continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Human Rights Council Resolution on Older Persons, 2025

(Section added April, 2025, after the resolution was adopted)

Adopted by the Human Rights Council in March 2025 during its fifty-eighth session without a vote, this resolution marks a watershed moment in the international normative agenda on ageing.⁴³ The

⁴² [A/RES/79/226 QCPR](#)

⁴³ [A/HRC/58/L.24/Rev.1 HRC Resolution on Convention](#)

Council agreed to establish an **open-ended intergovernmental working group** with a formal mandate to draft an international **legally binding instrument** on the human rights of older persons.

The resolution builds on the work of the General Assembly, particularly resolution 78/324 and the OEWG's decision 14/1, and affirms that further international legal clarity is needed to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of older persons' rights.

- This resolution calls upon the new working group to consider the full body of evidence and recommendations developed by the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, alongside reports from the Secretary-General, OHCHR, the Independent Expert, and other UN human rights bodies.
- It emphasizes the meaningful participation of older persons and their representative organizations across all regions and invites their active contribution throughout the drafting process.
- The working group is mandated to meet twice a year in Geneva and will submit a progress report to the Human Rights Council at its sixty-third session. An organizational session will take place before the end of 2025.
- The Council further tasks the OHCHR with providing full support to the group and invites UN entities, Member States, and civil society to hold regional meetings and contribute inputs toward the instrument's development.

ECOSOC Resolution on the CSW Multi-Year Programme of Work, 2025

(Section added April, 2025, after the resolution was adopted)

Adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2025, resolution E/CN.6/2025/L.5 outlines thematic priorities through 2029.⁴⁴ The resolution recalls paragraph 67 of General Assembly resolution 79/147 of 17 December 2024 and invites the Commission to consider the issue of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all **older women as a focus area** for its seventieth session in 2026.

Update (2025):

- In 2025, the above was further operationalized through a shared understanding that the focus on older women at the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) will be reflected through a dedicated Ministerial Round Table in the first week of the session. This format enables high-level engagement by Ministers and senior policymakers, elevating the issue of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all older women to the highest political level within the Commission's deliberations. The Ministerial Round Table provides a critical platform to advance policy coherence, share

⁴⁴ [E/CN.6/2025/L.5 MYPOW](https://www.un.org/development/desa/gender/equality/2025/03/01/2025-l-5-mypow)

national experiences, and catalyze concrete commitments to address the gendered dimensions of ageing and demographic change across the life course.

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – Ministerial Declaration, 2025

Adopted at the 2025 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of ECOSOC, the Ministerial Declaration includes explicit references relevant to population ageing and to the life-course framing of gender equality within SDG implementation.⁴⁵

- The Declaration reaffirms commitments to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls **throughout their life course**, anchoring life-course language within the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.
- It commits to improving strategies for the **ageing population**, explicitly referencing alignment with the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), thereby recognizing ageing as a relevant dimension of SDG implementation, particularly in the health domain.

The Declaration provides a normative basis for situating ageing within SDG processes and for advancing a life-course approach to gender equality that encompasses women's rights and well-being in older age.

Second World Summit for Social Development – Doha Political Declaration, 2025

Adopted at the Second World Summit for Social Development, the Doha Political Declaration contains explicit and substantive language on demographic shifts, including population ageing, and outlines policy responses with clear relevance for gender equality and life-course approaches.⁴⁶

- The Declaration explicitly recognizes **demographic shifts, including population ageing**, as among the opportunities, challenges, and risks that require policy attention within social development frameworks.
- It calls for **responding to demographic shifts, including population ageing**, through strengthened social protection systems and expanded access to services, including healthcare and lifelong learning.
- It includes explicit life-course language in the context of care and protection, calling for **ensuring access to social protection for caregivers and care receivers throughout the life course**.
- The Declaration's gender equality commitments include recognition of women's **disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work**, underscoring the structural

⁴⁵ [E/2025/L.16-E/HLPF/2025/L.1](#)

⁴⁶ [Doha Political Declaration Agreed Text](#)

gender inequalities that accumulate over time and shape women's experiences in older age.

Although the Doha Declaration situates population ageing, care, social protection, and gender equality within a life-course framework, providing strong normative grounding for addressing the rights, dignity, and well-being of women as they age.

ECOSOC Resolution – Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System, 2025

Adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 2025, the resolution on mainstreaming a gender perspective explicitly connects demographic trends and shifts to gender mainstreaming and includes direct reference to older women and life-course policy needs.⁴⁷

- The resolution reiterates the request that the United Nations development system support Member States, upon request, in responding to **demographic trends and realities**, explicitly noting the need to take into consideration **the needs and empowerment of older women**.
- It calls for ensuring adequate resources for **capacity and technical helpdesks, including on demographic shifts**, so that policies and programmes address the needs of **all women and girls throughout their life course**.

This resolution is significant in explicitly linking demographic change to gender mainstreaming obligations and in naming older women within the context of demographic trends, reinforcing the imperative to integrate ageing considerations into gender-responsive policy design and implementation.

HLCP Task Team on Demographic Change – UN System Common Messages on Policy Responses to Demographic Change, 2025

Developed by the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) Task Team on Demographic Change and endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in October 2025, the UN System Common Messages articulate a shared system-wide approach to demographic change grounded in human rights and gender equality.⁴⁸

- The Common Messages explicitly state that demographic trends have implications **for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across the life course**, embedding a life-course gender lens within UN system responses to demographic change.
- They call for efforts to **combat ageism** and to protect the human rights and dignity of older persons, **in particular older women who face intersecting forms of discrimination**, explicitly naming older women within system-wide messaging.

⁴⁷ [E/2025/L.14](#)

⁴⁸ [UN System Common Messages to Demographic Change](#)

- The document emphasizes the importance of strengthening **social protection systems** to provide income security and access to services **throughout the life course**, including through investment in care services.
- The Common Messages are framed as a communications and coherence tool to ensure that the UN system “speaks with one voice” when engaging with Member States on demographic change, aligning policy responses with rights-based and gender-responsive principles.

As a CEB-endorsed product, the Common Messages provide a key normative and operational reference point for aligning UN system action on demographic change with commitments to gender equality, life-course approaches, and the rights and dignity of older women.

The evolution of global ageing policies has been marked by significant milestones, from the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to recent UN resolutions. A full timeline of key developments is provided in [Annex I](#).

A Convention on the Rights of Older Persons: Why It Matters

Despite the existence of international frameworks, older persons—especially older women—remain vulnerable to discrimination, economic insecurity, and violence due to gaps in legal protection. While the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) provides a policy framework, it lacks binding legal obligations, making enforcement inconsistent. A UN convention would fill these gaps by establishing a clear, enforceable set of rights for older persons and ensuring international accountability.

How a Convention Can Strengthen Protections for Older Persons

1. Establish Legally Binding Rights and Protections
 - Codify the rights of older persons in international human rights law, ensuring that States are obligated to uphold them.
 - Provide explicit protections against age discrimination, ensuring equal access to employment, healthcare, social security, and justice.
2. Ensure Gender-Specific Protections for Older Women
 - Recognize the compounded effects of lifelong gender discrimination, which result in higher poverty rates, weaker social protections, and greater caregiving burdens for older women.
 - Address gender-based violence, including elder abuse, financial exploitation, and neglect.
 - Strengthen pension and social protection systems to reduce the gender pension gap and mitigate economic insecurity in old age.
3. Expand Rights to Health, Social Inclusion, and Participation
 - Guarantee access to gerontological healthcare services, including treatment for chronic illnesses, Alzheimer's, and mental health conditions.
 - Recognize the contributions of older persons to caregiving, advocating for supportive policies that ease unpaid care burdens.
 - Strengthen social protection systems to prevent elder abuse, economic exploitation, and discrimination in access to public services.
 - Promote accessibility and inclusive infrastructure, ensuring barrier-free environments, assistive technologies, and safe transportation.
 - Ensure full participation in public life and decision-making, reinforcing older persons' rights in governance, elections, and policy design.
4. Promote Intersectional and Inclusive Policy Approaches
 - Ensure that older women, Indigenous persons, refugees, and those with disabilities receive tailored protections.

- Strengthen anti-ageism measures in education, healthcare, and labor policies to eliminate stereotypes and promote the full inclusion of older persons in society.
- 5. Improve Accountability and Monitoring
 - Require regular State reporting to track progress and identify gaps in protecting the rights of older persons.
 - Establish an independent monitoring body, similar to treaty bodies in other UN conventions, to review compliance and recommend improvements.
- 6. Complement Existing International Agreements
 - Reinforce commitments made under CEDAW General Recommendation No. 27, the Madrid Plan of Action, and regional human rights frameworks.
 - Provide a stronger legal foundation for Member States to implement age-sensitive policies aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 3, 5, and 10).
- 7. Address Emerging Global Challenges
 - Protect older persons during armed conflict and foreign occupation, ensuring access to humanitarian assistance and security.
 - Recognize older persons' contributions to climate action, ensuring their inclusion in adaptation and mitigation strategies.
 - Promote digital inclusion, supporting lifelong learning, digital skills training, and access to technology for older persons.

A Convention on the Rights of Older Persons would fill critical gaps, advance gender equality in ageing, and ensure that older persons live with dignity, security, and full participation in society.

Integrating Ageing into UN Women’s Strategic Plan: Why It Matters

While a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons would represent the highest normative achievement, it is likely to be a lengthy process. Simultaneously, therefore, a multifaceted approach remains essential to strengthening the status and well-being of older women. Integrating ageing into UN Women’s strategic plan ensures the advancement of gender-responsive policies, addresses discrimination across the life-course, and expands rights and opportunities for women of all ages.⁴⁹

Aligning with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 3 (health and well-being), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), a dedicated focus on ageing would:

- Recognize the unique situations and challenges faced by older women. As, most recently, reiterated in the B+30 regional reviews. ([See Annex II](#))
- Ensure coordinated, intersectional, life-course approaches to gender equality policies, preventing gaps that disproportionately affect older women.
- Strengthen UN Women’s advocacy for a Convention on Older Persons, ensuring legal protections and global accountability for their rights. This includes mobilizing broader support from civil society, and other stakeholders to advance the agenda at national and international levels. ([See Annex III](#))

What UN Women Can Do

Several UN entities have taken steps to advance the ageing agenda, with efforts spanning policy advocacy, research, and program implementation. ([See Annex IV](#))

Policy Advocacy⁵⁰

- Advocate for an international convention on the rights of older persons and support the establishment of a UN Special Rapporteur to enhance accountability and oversight.
- Mainstream age and gender perspectives in all policies and programmes, ensuring a holistic approach that addresses the cumulative effects of gender discrimination across the life course.
- Support the development of national and regional ageing strategies that promote gender equality, social protection, and inclusive economic opportunities for older women.
- Coalesce relevant stakeholders around the International Day of Older Persons (October 1) to advocate and progress the incorporation of the rights and perspectives of older women in all relevant national and institutional policies and programmes.

⁴⁹ As recognized in the Area 1 on Population Dynamics of the [Critical Trends](#) impacting women and girls worldwide

⁵⁰ [CSW 68 Agreed Conclusions para 21](#)

Data Collection and Research⁵¹

- Strengthen the collection, analysis, and dissemination of age- and gender-disaggregated data in national and global statistics. To ensure older women's experiences are fully visible and accounted for in decision-making, and to address critical data gaps particularly in areas such as poverty, unpaid work, healthcare access, housing, and violence, the following policy recommendations from the "*Improving the Visibility of Older Persons in Global Statistics*" report⁵² are crucial:
 - Leverage Diverse Data Sources: Expand the use of administrative registers and census data to provide richer insights and enable finer age-disaggregation for older populations.
 - Standardise Data Collection: Harmonise definitions and data collection methods across countries to establish more consistent, reliable, and comparable age-disaggregated datasets.
 - Revise and Enhance Surveys: Modify existing sample surveys to ensure that older age groups are accurately represented, capturing a fuller spectrum of their needs and experiences.
 - Invest in National Statistical Systems: Increase financial and technical support for strengthening the infrastructure necessary for robust data collection and reporting on older persons.
 - Foster Global Collaboration: Promote greater collaboration and mutual learning between countries and international organisations to enhance data comparability and accessibility, supporting inclusive Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation. The Data Revolution must prioritise these efforts to close data gaps and accurately reflect older women's realities.
- Conduct longitudinal studies on ageing and gender inequality to identify trends and inform evidence-based policies.
- Develop data systems to capture the gendered experience of poverty and unpaid care work beyond income data alone.
- Leverage digital and AI-driven solutions to improve data accessibility, enhance monitoring of ageing-related inequalities, and expand older women's participation in the digital economy.

Capacity Building

- Train policymakers and practitioners on ageing and gender-sensitive approaches to ensure inclusive policy planning.

⁵¹ [Caring for carers: Recognizing the rights and contributions of older women](#) (UN Women, 2023); [Older women: Inequality at the intersection of age and gender](#) (UN Women, 2022)

⁵² [Improving the visibility of older persons in global statistics](#) (Office of National Statistics SA, 2024)

- Empower older women through capacity-building initiatives focused on leadership, entrepreneurship, and civic participation.
- Promote lifelong learning opportunities for older women to improve literacy and access to education.

Community Engagement⁵³

- Foster intergenerational solidarity programs to reduce ageism and build support networks.
- Combat stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, by integrating positive narratives of older women in media, education, and policymaking.
- Promote civic participation and leadership opportunities for older women in local governance, social movements, and cultural initiatives.

Strengthening Health and Social Protections

- Advocate for investments in affordable, high-quality care services to address the needs of older persons and reduce the disproportionate burden on unpaid caregivers.
- Support the development of national frameworks for long-term care that ensure equitable access for older women.
- Advocate for non-contributory pension schemes and social protection measures that enhance financial security and address the gendered impact of unpaid caregiving and informal labor.
- Strengthen policies on elder care and workforce participation to balance work, caregiving, and financial security for women across their life-course.

⁵³ [Raising the profile of older women at CSW68](#) (2023) and [CSW 68 Agreed Conclusions para 21](#)

Conclusion

Population ageing is a testament to humanity's progress, yet it demands urgent and sustained action to unlock its full potential and address its challenges. As fertility declines and life expectancy rises, countries may experience a second demographic dividend—driven by increased capital intensity and retirement savings. However, this opportunity will only be fully realized if women can participate equally. Women's historically lower earnings and interrupted careers mean they often lack the savings needed to benefit from this dividend. Thus, policies must intentionally address gendered barriers to financial inclusion, pension reform, and employment in later life. Otherwise, the second dividend may deepen inequality rather than close it.

Systemic discrimination against older women remains deeply entrenched, reinforced by institutional, cultural, social and institutional that accumulate over a lifetime. Despite their contributions, older women are largely absent from global policy discussions, facing economic insecurity, caregiving burdens, and intersecting inequalities. While existing frameworks offer guidance, the absence of a binding legal instrument leaves them without critical protections and accountability mechanisms.

UN Women is uniquely positioned to drive change. By leveraging its expertise in gender advocacy, coalition-building, and policy influence, it can:

- Ensure a life-course approach and mainstream older women's perspectives into all policies remains a priority in international human rights discussions and global development frameworks
- Strengthen Member States' commitments to integrating ageing into national gender policies.
- Support efforts toward a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons to establish stronger legal protections and accountability mechanisms.

The 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action presents a critical moment to assess progress and accelerate gender equality efforts. This milestone offers a unique opportunity to embed ageing within global gender priorities, ensuring that commitments to equality extend across the life course. No woman should be left behind at any stage of life, and older women must be properly respected and recognized both as deserving beneficiaries and as active contributors to society.

The time has come to act decisively to protect the rights of older women. UN Women, as it embarks on its next strategic plan, can lead this effort—mobilizing support, shaping policies, and championing a future where ageing and gender equality are inseparable priorities. The moment to act is now.

For further reference, a curated list of key reports, resolutions, and publications related to ageing and gender equality is available in [Annex V](#).

Annex I

Timeline of Key Developments

- **1982:** The First World Assembly on Ageing, held in Vienna, Austria, identifies population ageing as a global issue with vital links to development.
- **2002:** The Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid adopts the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), a landmark agreement committing governments to "building a society for all ages". This plan provides guidance on a broad range of issues including older persons and development, advancing health and well-being into old age, and ensuring enabling and supportive environments.
- **2010:** The General Assembly (GA) establishes the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, tasked with identifying gaps in the international framework for the rights of older persons and how best to address them.
- **2010:** The UN General Assembly declares 23 June as International Widows' Day
- **2012:** The GA requests the Working Group to present a proposal containing the main elements to include in an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons.
- **2016-2030:** The UN has a global strategy and action plan on ageing and health
- **2017:** The World Health Assembly adopts the Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health.
- **2018:** The Economic Commission for Europe issues a policy brief on long-term care .
- **2018:** The Statistical Commission agrees to establish a Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data
- **2018:** A report of the Secretary-General focuses on the cross-cutting issues involved in the provision of high-quality and affordable long-term care for older persons, while also taking into account the needs of paid and unpaid care providers
- **2020-2030:** The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing is launched. This decade is meant to build on the Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health (2016–2030). It includes a multisectoral approach to healthy ageing and seeks to involve all segments of society, irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, ability or location
- **2023:** The General Assembly adopts resolution 78/177, recognising the importance of strengthening intergenerational partnerships and highlighting the role of MIPAA. It also calls for age-inclusive approaches and combating age-based discrimination.
- **2023:** The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing adopts decision 13/1 which requested the Chair to appoint co-facilitators to consider the existing international framework of human rights for older persons and to identify possible gaps.

- **2023:** UN DESA in collaboration with the Mission of Japan and the Global Coalition on Ageing, organized the 2023 Silver Economy Forum “Advancing the SDGs in the Decade of Healthy Ageing.
- **May 2024:** The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing holds its fourteenth session. During this session, it:
 - Considers measures to enhance the promotion and protection of the human rights and dignity of older persons.
 - Holds interactive discussions on the follow-up to resolution 78/177, focusing on areas like the right to health, social inclusion, accessibility, and participation in public life.
 - Adopts decision 14/1, which includes recommendations regarding the identification of gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons.
 - Agrees to include the Chair’s summary of the key points of the discussions in its report.
- **July 2024:** A report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, highlights opportunities and challenges for current and future generations of older persons. It emphasizes strengthening intergenerational partnerships and solidarity.
- **August 2024:** The General Assembly adopts **resolution 78/324**, which:
 - Decides that the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing has completed its work.
 - Urges relevant United Nations bodies to further consider the recommendations adopted by the Working Group in its decision 14/1.
 - Requests the President of the General Assembly (PGA) to hold a high-level meeting (HLM) at its seventy-ninth session to exchange views and share experiences on these recommendations, and to define next steps on the challenges and opportunities regarding the rights and well-being of older persons.
 - This resolution was adopted signaling broad agreement on the next steps.
- **April 2025:** The Human Rights Council adopts resolution A/HRC/58/L.24/Rev.1 at its fifty-eighth session, establishing an open-ended intergovernmental working group with the mandate to elaborate and submit a draft international legally binding instrument on the human rights of older persons. The resolution:
 - Calls for contributions from all stakeholders, including States, UN entities, civil society organizations, and older persons’ representatives.
 - Requests the working group to report progress to the Human Rights Council at its sixty-third session.
 - Sets out that the working group will meet for two five-day sessions annually in Geneva, beginning with an organizational session before the end of 2025.

Annex II

Beijing+30 Regional Review Insights

The Beijing+30 regional reviews highlight both progress and persistent challenges in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, with specific implications for older women. Here's a summary of key findings from each region:

- **ECA (Economic Commission for Africa):** The review notes recent efforts to improve social protection through social protection programmes, entrepreneurship support, access to resources, and cash transfers, but coverage remains inadequate with low spending, disproportionately affecting older women who may rely on these services.⁵⁴ The review emphasises need for gender-responsive social protection systems and the recognition of unpaid care work through national statistics and social protection services.⁵⁵ Strides in women's health are noted, but challenges persist, including inadequate rural infrastructure and disparities for marginalised communities.⁵⁶ Lack of age-disaggregated data means specific challenges for older women are not addressed.⁵⁷
- **ECE (Economic Commission for Europe):** Regional findings highlight that older women disproportionately experience economic insecurity due to the persistent gender pension gap. This vulnerability is compounded because active employment does not always guarantee a decent standard of living; policies should, therefore, address lifetime earnings, a critical factor in preventing poverty in old age for women.⁵⁸ Across numerous countries in the region, a 'crisis of care' is evident, with quality care services often unaffordable or inaccessible. Targeted reforms are needed to improve older women's access to healthcare and social inclusion measures. This is reflected in the unmet demand for care workers and exacerbated by population ageing.⁵⁹ For example, the Elderly Care Initiative in Sweden supports municipalities in strengthening skills in health and social care for older people.⁶⁰ The review emphasizes that women's political participation is negatively impacted by their disproportionate unpaid workload and caregiving responsibilities. Furthermore, violence against women in politics and public life, including widespread online harassment and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, remains a significant barrier.⁶¹ The region underscores the importance of implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as

⁵⁴ [Africa Beijing+30 Summary Report](#), p 22

⁵⁵ [Africa Beijing+30 Outcome Document](#), cluster 1

⁵⁶ [Africa Beijing+30 Outcome Document](#), cluster 1

⁵⁷ [Africa Beijing+30 Summary Report](#), p 1

⁵⁸ [E/CN.6/2025/3](#) para 38

⁵⁹ [E/CN.6/2025/3](#) para 53

⁶⁰ [E/CN.6/2025/3](#) para 48

⁶¹ [E/CN.6/2025/3](#) para 24

a key framework for advancing gender equality and addressing these interconnected challenges.⁶²

- **ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean):** The review emphasizes the need to address the intersection of ageing and inequality, particularly among older women in rural areas and indigenous communities. Rapid population ageing and increased demand for care are creating and perpetuating gender gaps. It highlights that women outside the labour market lack access to contributory social protection, affecting their present well-being and future income.⁶³ The current social organisation of care deprives many women of adequate access to social protection. A higher incidence of informality and lower labour participation among women translate into larger pension gaps and lower contributory pension coverage. In 2021, 23.1% of women aged 65 and over did not have access to a pension, compared to 19.2% of men. Almost one quarter of women aged 65 and over (23.7%) received pensions below the poverty line, compared to one fifth of men in that age group (19.7%).⁶⁴ Evidence shows that, owing to gaps and structural barriers in the labour market, non-contributory policies account for a higher share of women's income than men's. In the Latin American countries for which information is available, non-contributory pension system coverage for people over 65 years of age tends to be higher among women. Given that women have a greater life expectancy than men, if the current social organisation of care does not change, women will increasingly find themselves in the dual position of giving care while needing it themselves.⁶⁵
- **ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific):** The Asia-Pacific region has made progress in some areas, but gender disparities in labor markets and multidimensional poverty remain entrenched particularly for older women who face compounded challenges related to unequal access to social protection, healthcare, and economic opportunities. The review emphasizes the urgent need to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care work, which disproportionately impacts women.⁶⁶ Gender-responsive social protection systems, including financially sustainable pension schemes, are essential to address the challenges of rapid population ageing and ensure income security.⁶⁷ The review also calls for targeted programs to address inequalities in access to public services such as healthcare, education, and social protection, particularly for women facing multiple forms of discrimination and to be inclusive while addressing biases based on gender, age, and disability.⁶⁸ Strengthening gender data and statistics, including on care, health, and climate change impacts, is critical for informed policymaking. The review highlights the importance of gender-responsive budgeting and partnerships to

⁶² [E/CN.6/2025/3](#) pp. 4-6

⁶³ [ECLAC Regional Report](#) p. 34

⁶⁴ [ECLAC Regional Report](#) p. 35

⁶⁵ [ECLAC Regional Report](#) p. 34

⁶⁶ [Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review Chapter 3](#)

⁶⁷ [Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review Chapter 2](#)

⁶⁸ [Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review Chapter 2](#)

support countries with the largest gender gaps.⁶⁹ Prioritizing actions to eliminate violence against women, support economic empowerment, improve education, and increase women's political participation along with including older women in decision-making processes, is imperative to achieving shared prosperity in the region.⁷⁰

- **ESCWA (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia):** The review highlights that many older persons, especially women, face poor pension coverage and inadequate health-care services. The findings note that most countries have failed to focus on unpaid care work. While some Arab countries have devised strategies to support vulnerable groups, including older persons, the number of older persons is expected to increase to 71 million by 2050, so these issues may become more pressing.⁷¹ The review notes that, countries have taken action to support marginalized women, such as older women, and have implemented programmes to protect them and provide them. Tunisia, for example, has established toll-free lines to report elder abuse of older women.⁷²

Common Themes Across Regions

- Data Gaps: All regions highlight the need for better data collection and analysis, particularly disaggregated data by age and sex, to understand the specific challenges faced by older women.
- Unpaid Care Work: The disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women is a significant barrier to economic empowerment and needs to be addressed through policy and investment in the care economy.
- Economic Empowerment: All regions acknowledge the need to improve women's access to decent work, entrepreneurship opportunities, and financial resources, all of which can help to reduce poverty in older age.
- Social Protection: There are calls for more robust social protection systems and adequate health care for older women, recognizing their unique vulnerabilities.
- Political Participation and Leadership: There is a need to increase women's representation in decision-making positions, and to ensure women's voices are heard in policy and practice.
- Gender-Based Violence: Violence against women and girls is a significant barrier and must be addressed in all its forms.
- Implementation Gaps: All regions note that despite some progress, significant gaps remain in translating policy commitments into real improvements for women's lives, and there is a need for greater resources and accountability.
- Intersectional approach: There is recognition that women experience intersecting forms of discrimination based on age, race, disability and socioeconomic status.

⁶⁹ [Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review Chapter 5](#)

⁷⁰ [Asia-Pacific Regional Report on Beijing+30 Review Chapter 8](#)

⁷¹ [Arab Report Summary p.4](#)

⁷² [Arab Report Summary p.18](#)

Annex III

Mobilizing Support for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons: Actions for Individuals and Organizations⁷³

Extracted from Resource Guide: [Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN Convention](#)

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons cannot be achieved without broad public support in many countries. Here are some general suggestions of what individuals and organizations can do to promote a convention in their own countries:

1. Begin by obtaining the commitment of your organization's leadership to work towards the realization of a convention.
2. Translate key United Nations and other documents, including this publication, into local languages.
3. Gather evidence of discrimination, abuse, neglect, or violence against older people to support the need for a Convention in your country.
4. Identify and utilize national and local academic and civic resources, particularly for population and socio-economic data regarding the country's older population. The UN Population Division provides country and regional demographic profiles at: <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp>. Other socio-economic data can be accessed from the Population Division's homepage at: www.un.org/esa/population/unpop.htm
5. Develop and implement a strategy to build public support for a convention:
 - Reach out to other social groups (youth, religious, unions, women, people with a disability, etc.) to recognize social interdependence and foster social solidarity.
 - Educate your membership, other NGOs, media, and all levels of government on the need for a convention.
 - Find and use a simple slogan or tag that encourages the public to support your campaign for a convention.
 - Form coalitions with other supporting groups.
 - Create a network for information sharing among organizations and with the public.
 - Publicize a convention via the internet, YouTube, blogs, interviews, letters to newspaper editors and other media.
6. Identify opponents' reasons for opposing a convention and develop rebuttals. Identify key focal points in government for older people and other policy-making allies for older people's rights.
7. Call, write and meet with legislators and administrative officials to advocate for a convention.
8. Share developments in your country with other organizations both within and outside your country.

⁷³ [Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN Convention](#)

Annex IV

Examples of System-Wide Initiatives on Ageing

Several UN entities are advancing the ageing agenda, with some entities leading key inter-agency efforts and initiatives. UN DESA, WHO, and OHCHR play prominent roles in coordinating system-wide action, while other entities integrate ageing considerations into sectoral policies and programs. The following initiatives reflect the broad scope of UN efforts on ageing and are listed alphabetically by entity

1. ECLAC

- ECLAC works with governments and civil society to strengthen legal protections and social policies for older persons across Latin America and the Caribbean, advocating for a life-course approach to social protection systems.
- ECLAC recently published a policy brief on intergenerational relations that highlights the contributions of older persons to economic and social development, particularly in unpaid care work, knowledge transfer, and community cohesion. It underscores the need for age-inclusive labor policies, lifelong learning opportunities, and social protection systems that recognize the evolving demographic landscape.⁷⁴

2. FAO

- FAO researches the impact of population ageing on food security and rural development, highlighting how demographic shifts affect agricultural productivity and livelihoods. Their research explores the role of older farmers in food systems and the importance of sustaining intergenerational farming practices.⁷⁵
- FAO works with governments to develop gender- and age-responsive agricultural policies, ensuring that rural ageing populations have equitable access to agricultural training, financial services, and decision-making platforms. Their guidance informs national policies on sustainable farming, climate resilience, and rural employment.
- FAO provides technical assistance to countries in designing social protection schemes for older farmers, including pensions and rural safety nets. They support the implementation of policies that improve livelihoods and resilience in ageing rural communities, particularly in the context of food security and climate adaptation.

3. IFAD

- IFAD highlights the growing concentration of older populations in rural areas, emphasizing that ageing farmers—especially women—continue to be a dominant part of the agricultural workforce. IFAD advocates for equal access to productive resources, financial services, and training for older farmers to sustain rural economies.

⁷⁴ <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/80677-intergenerational-relations-creating-world-all-ages-so-one-left-behind>

⁷⁵ https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/documents/fourteenth%20session/INPUTS%20UN%20SYSTEM/FAO_normative.pdf

- Through its projects, IFAD promotes intergenerational knowledge-sharing, ensuring that older farmers remain key decision-makers in land use and household livelihoods. It also supports rural policies that enhance economic security for ageing farmers.
- IFAD integrates older people into agricultural value chains by improving access to farm subsidies, microcredit, and tailored training programs. It applies non-discrimination principles in its Social, Environmental, and Climate Assessment Procedures, ensuring that ageing rural populations are included in sustainable farming programs.
- IFAD has implemented targeted rural development projects benefiting older populations, such as evening literacy classes for pastoral elders in Ethiopia, access to solar-powered enterprises for older rural workers in India, and subsidies for sustainable agriculture practices in Kenya.⁷⁶

4. ILO

- ILO conducts research on the challenges and opportunities of ageing workforces, emphasizing the need for inclusive labour markets and policies that support older workers. Their studies highlight the importance of extending working lives, ensuring equal access to employment, and adapting workplace policies to demographic shifts.⁷⁷ Additionally, the ITC-ILO offers specialized training programs, such as "Employment in Ageing Societies," to build the capacities of policymakers and practitioners in designing age-inclusive employment policies and lifelong learning strategies.
- ILO advocates for policies that protect older workers from discrimination and exclusion, ensuring income security, access to training, and safe working conditions. Particular attention is given to informal economies, where older workers are often overrepresented and lack adequate protections.
- ILO emphasizes continuous skill development and reskilling of older workers to keep pace with technological advancements. Their policies promote inclusive lifelong learning programs that prevent older workers from being displaced in evolving labour markets.

5. OHCHR

- OHCHR, in partnership with UN DESA, serves as the secretariat for this working group, which is tasked with identifying gaps in the protection of older persons' rights and exploring the feasibility of new legal instruments.
- OHCHR provides specific guidance to states and stakeholders concerning the rights of older persons, emphasizing the need for their inclusion in decision-making processes and protection from discrimination.

⁷⁶ https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/documents/twelfth/INPUTS%20UNS/IFAD_Submission_GA%20Working%20Group%20on%20Ageing_12th%20Session_clean.pdf

⁷⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/challenges-and-opportunities-of-an-ageing-workforce>

- OHCHR is currently prioritizing: (i) Awareness Raising, Advocacy and Outreach (ii) Partnerships, networks and coalitions to work collaboratively (iii) Develop tools to support Member States.⁷⁸

6. UN DESA

- UN DESA leads the United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Ageing (IAGA), a network that coordinates efforts across UN entities to address issues pertinent to ageing and older persons.⁷⁹
- In February 2025, IAGA released a joint advocacy brief emphasizing the importance of integrating population ageing and the rights of older persons into the agenda of the Second World Summit for Social Development.⁸⁰
- UN DESA collaborates with various stakeholders to observe the International Day of Older Persons and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, promoting global recognition of ageing issues.⁸¹

7. UNDP

- UNDP produces policy briefs on the intersection of ageing and gender within the Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies that prevent the marginalization of older persons, particularly women, in economic and social development. These briefs advocate for a life-course approach that recognizes older persons as active contributors to development while promoting their economic security, participation, and well-being.⁸²

8. UNFPA

- UNFPA supports countries in addressing challenges related to ageing, population decline, low fertility, and migration through its Demographic Resilience Programme. This initiative strengthens population data collection, policy dialogue, and technical assistance for ageing-related policy and planning.⁸³
- UNFPA advocates for healthy and active ageing, supporting the establishment of healthy ageing centres, the integration of older persons into social and economic systems, and the creation of inclusive societies that recognize the contributions of older individuals.
- UNFPA provides policy guidance on designing inclusive social protection, pension systems, and health policies, particularly in countries with rapid population ageing.

⁷⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/older-persons#:~:text=OHCHR%20is%20a%20member%20of,work%20of%20the%20UN%20system>.

⁷⁹ <https://social.desa.un.org/Issues/ageing/iaga>

⁸⁰ https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/FINAL_WSSD2_Joint%20UN%20IAGA%20Advocacy%20Brief_Feb2025.pdf

⁸¹ <https://social.desa.un.org/Issues/ageing/world-elder-abuse-awareness-day>

⁸² <https://www.undp.org/publications/leave-no-one-behind-ageing-gender-and-sdgs>

⁸³ <https://www.unfpa.org/ageing#readmore-expand>

- UNFPA provides tailored support for older women in crisis situations, such as those displaced by war, ensuring access to healthcare, social protection, and economic opportunities.

9. UN-Habitat

- UN-Habitat held the Older Persons Roundtable.⁸⁴ This session focused on policy dialogues such as Dialogue 1, “Housing our future,” focusing on creating housing that works for all, especially older persons; Dialogue 2, “Cities and the climate crisis,” as older persons in cities are often among those most affected by climate-related stressors such as pollution, vector-borne diseases, higher temperatures, and an increasing frequency and intensity of disasters; and Dialogue 5 with an emphasis on “Putting people first in the digital era”, as the age-based digital divide means that older persons are at high risk of digital exclusion. As such, guaranteeing the effective, meaningful participation of older persons in local decision-making on these critical issues must be a priority for all cities and local authorities.
- UN-Habitat held the Urban Innovation Series – a series of conversations, discussions and exchanges hosted by UN-Habitat’s Innovation Unit, with the purpose of highlighting UN-Habitat’s work on innovation and bringing together experts and thought leaders from multiple disciplines to discuss urban innovation, frontier technology, digital transformation, urban data governance, smart cities and related topics. It contributes to making UN-Habitat a Centre of Excellence through innovation. In 2023, the Innovation Unit of UN-Habitat hosted a webinar on Digital Inclusion and Literacy of Older Persons in Cities.

10. UNU

- UNU has conducted studies exploring the implications of ageing and shrinking populations on urban sustainability. These studies examine how demographic shifts impact the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and propose interventions to leverage opportunities and mitigate challenges arising from these changes.⁸⁵
- UNU has organized webinars and events focusing on the integration of palliative care into health systems. These initiatives aim to address the challenges in advocating for and implementing comprehensive palliative care, especially in the context of ageing populations requiring specialized health services.

11. WHO

- WHO has developed a comprehensive strategy to promote healthy ageing, focusing on aligning health systems to the needs of older populations, developing age-friendly environments, and improving measurement and monitoring of ageing trends.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ <https://wuf.unhabitat.org/event/wuf12/older-persons-roundtable>

⁸⁵ <https://unu.edu/topics/ageing>

⁸⁶ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241513500>

- In collaboration with UN DESA, ITU, and UN Women, WHO published an advocacy brief addressing the scale and impact of social isolation and loneliness among older people, proposing strategies to mitigate these issues.⁸⁷
- WHO leads the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) initiative, bringing together governments, civil society, international agencies, and other stakeholders to improve the lives of older people, their families, and communities.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240030749>

⁸⁸ <https://www.who.int/initiatives/decade-of-healthy-ageing>

Annex V

Links to Key Resources

Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing	Link
CEDAW Convention and the General Recommendation Number 27	Link
Strengthening Older People's Rights: Towards a UN Convention	Link
Report of the Secretary General A/79/157 – Follow up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing	Link
GA Resolution adopted Aug 2024 A/RES/78/324 - Consideration of decision 14/1 of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, entitled “Recommendations regarding the identification of possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of older persons and how best to address them”	Link
GA Resolution adopted Dec 2023 A/RES/78/177 - Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing	Link
GA Resolution adopted Dec 2010 A/RES/65/182 - Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing	Link
Report of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing on its fourteenth session A/AC.278/2024/2	Link
ECOSOC Resolution E/RES/2023/15 - Fourth review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002	Link
Regional reviews of the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of MIPAA	Link
Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action	Link
World Social Report 2024	Link
Global Report on Ageism	Link
Summit of the Future - General Assembly, 6th plenary meeting, 79th session Statement by the Universal Postal Union on behalf of the UN Inter-Agency Group on Ageing	Link
Policy Brief on Violence against Older Women	Link
UN Inter-Agency Group on Ageing Joint Advocacy Brief	Link
Policy Brief - Intergenerational relations: creating a world for all ages so that no one is left behind	Link
Ageing for All Ages: the 2023 Silver Economy Forum	Link
Older Persons Roundtable - World Urban Forum 2024	Link
Older women: Inequality at the intersection of age and gender	Link
Raising the profile of older women at CSW68	Link
Caring for carers: Recognizing the rights and contributions of older women	Link
CSW68 Agreed Conclusions	Link
Help-Age International	Link