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1. CONTEXT

European countries are aging due to a reduced fertility coupled with increased life expectancy. Therefore, understanding to what extent Europeans are aging actively and whether active aging varies across population subgroups is becoming crucial.

Active aging measures the ability of older people to live independent and healthy aging lives. The word “active” refers to participation in social (e.g., volunteering and caregiving), going beyond the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labor force.

Research aims:

- We document gender differences in the prevalence and intensity of participation in four dimensions of active aging across 18 European countries.
- We further stratify the analyses by age groups (50-64 and 65-plus) to assess whether gender inequalities differ at pre- and post-retirement age.

2. METHODS

DATA:

•2013/2015 Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe in 18 European countries

•Respondents selection:

- First interview for each respondent
- 50 to 85 years of age

•**Working sample:** 76,514 persons; range between 791 in Portugal & 3,680 in Estonia (women) & between 637 in Portugal & 2,942 in Spain (men)

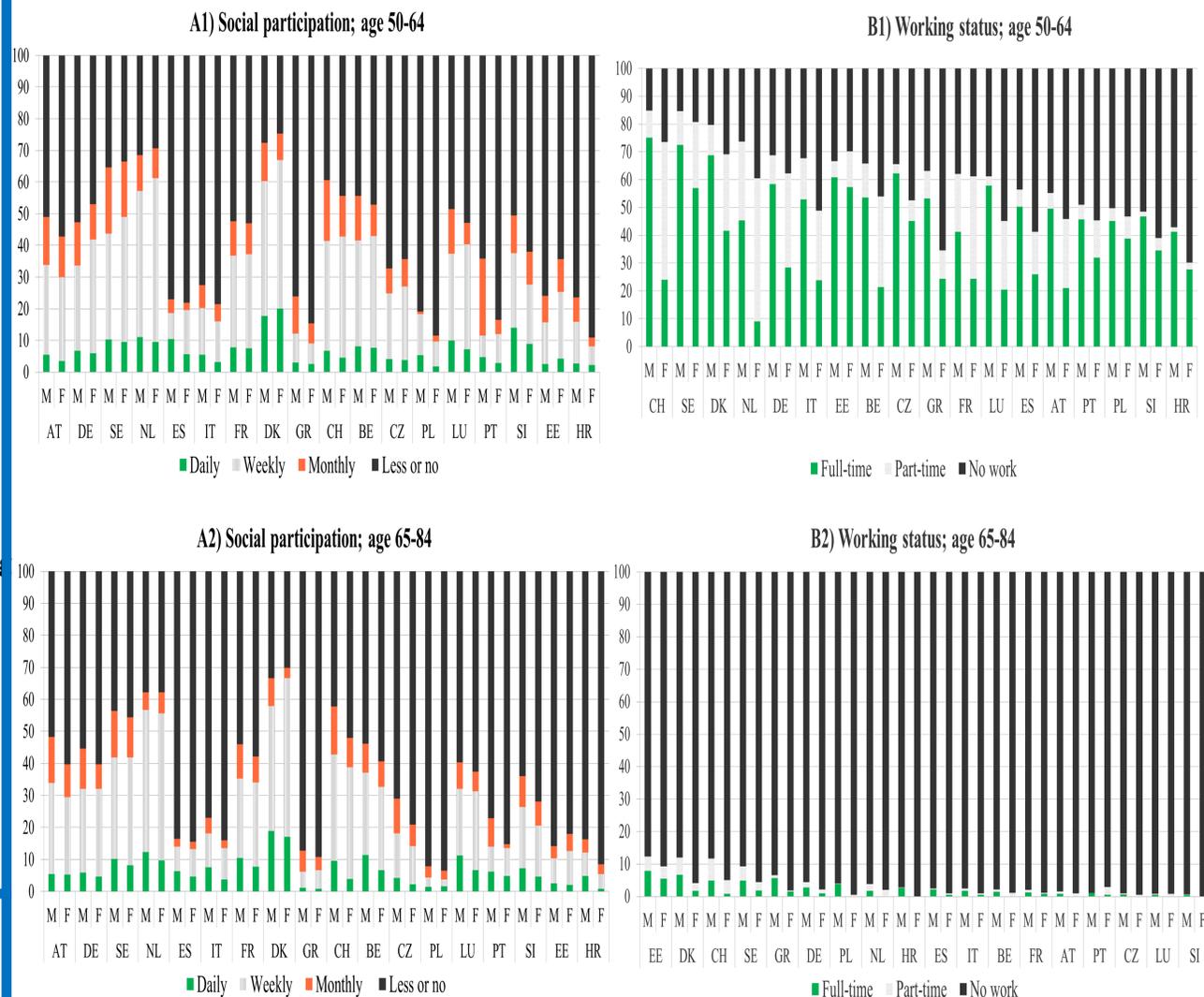
VARIABLES:

- Social participation:** volunteering, attending educational courses, participation in social clubs or political organizations [**intensity:** almost daily; almost weekly; almost monthly; less often or never]
- Paid work:** (1) not working; (2) working part-time; (3) working full-time
- Grandchild care** [**intensity:** almost daily; almost weekly; almost monthly; less often or never]
- Physical activities:** sports, heavy housework, or physical labor at job [**intensity:** more than once a week, once a week; 1 to 3 times a month; hardly ever or never]

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS: We computed weighted gender differences in the four dimensions of active ageing before and after retirement age.

3. RESULTS

Descriptive Findings: Participation in social activities (A) & labour force participation (B) by gender & country; before and after retirement age.



Note: Results for physical exercise and grandchild care available in the long abstract at the PAA 2018 website

- **Active engagement diminishes with age** and it is strongly gendered.
- Both prevalence of engagement & type of activities differ by gender.
 - **Men** tend to be more involved (more active) in social participation, paid work and vigorous physical exercise
 - **Women** are more involved in grandchild care.
- **Gender gaps** are considerably stronger for vigorous physical activities and paid work.
- **Gender gaps in active aging engagement** vary across countries being bigger in **Mediterranean** and some **Eastern European** countries

4. CONCLUSION

- Variations in gender inequalities in active engagement across countries hints to the **importance of cultural and structural factors** in influencing **opportunities for aging actively**
- Our results suggest that in presenting and interpreting the **Active Ageing Index** (and its components) more attention should be devoted on gender inequalities and their evolution over time.
- **Aging research** should address the **implications of gender inequalities in active aging for gender inequalities in health and well-being of older adults**

Contribution

Our findings **contribute** to both literatures on **gender equality & active aging** in Europe and open several avenues for **future research** that may integrate the two areas of research and policy debate.

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