



Women's Health Strategy Older People (65+) Focus Groups: Summary of findings

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Executive Summary

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This work formed part of a larger collaborative piece with the Partnership for Responsive Policy Analysis and Research (PREPARE), led by the University of York and including The Kings Fund.

Read the full report: [Women's Priorities for Women's Health: a focus group study](#).

Overview

In April 2021, the Department of Health & Social Care issued a call for evidence to develop a Women's Health Strategy. To support this, the NIHR Older People and Frailty Policy Research Unit undertook two focus groups with women aged 65 years and over. The aim of these focus groups was to understand older women's experiences of, and priorities for, their health and care.¹ This work formed part of a [larger collaborative responsive piece](#) with the Partnership for Responsive Policy Analysis and Research (PREPARE), led by the University of York and including The Kings Fund.

Findings

Fourteen women aged 64 – 76 years participated across two focus groups. Just over half of participants (57%) lived in areas ranked high on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Approximately two-thirds (64%) were White British. Four overarching themes were identified (table 1).

Table 1. Older women's experiences of health and care: themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
Women's health priorities and concerns	<i>General health, fitness and weight management</i>
	<i>Continued screening after age 70</i>
	<i>Managing long-term conditions</i>
	<i>Sexual/gynaecological health</i>
	<i>Being a carer</i>
	<i>Costs of, and financial barriers to, managing health</i>
	<i>Impact of COVID-19 lockdowns</i>
Being seen and heard in healthcare	<i>Menopause</i>
	<i>Invisibility</i>
Barriers in access to care	<i>Access to care specifically for older women</i>
	<i>Challenges of access to primary care</i>
Sources of information	<i>Devaluing own health when unable to access care</i>
	<i>Sources of information used</i>
	<i>Preferences and trustworthiness of sources</i>

Implications The Women's Health Strategy is a critical opportunity to enhance the service offer for older women who feel marginalised in health and care. Further work should explore diverse experiences across the full spectrum of older age, and within underrepresented ethnic communities. Key topics for further scrutiny include older women's sexual health needs, unpaid caring and the role of poverty in staying well in later life.

¹ This work supplemented data collected from women aged under 65 years by colleagues at PREPARE (Partnership for Responsive Policy Analysis and Research) York University, please see the full report [here](#).

This document is available in large print.

Please contact the NIHR Older People and Frailty PRU for assistance.

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