
Invisible Women in Comprehensive Plans

This research was conducted by Prof Warner's [Local Government Restructuring Lab](#). It was supported by funding from the Mui Ho Center for Cities and USDA NIFA.

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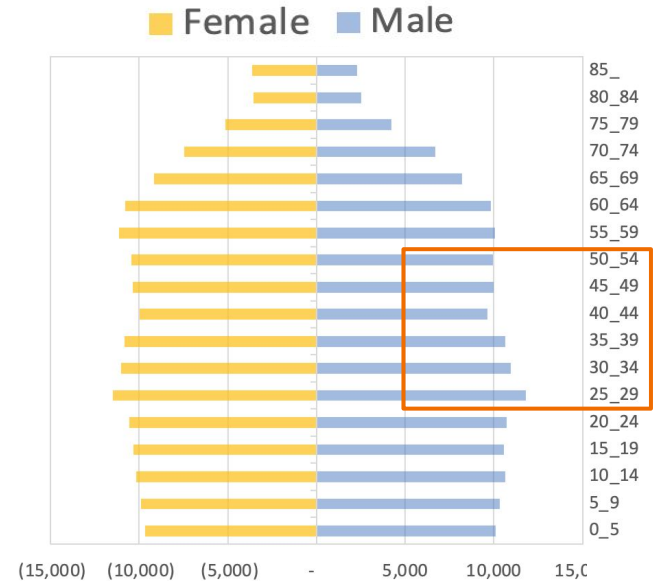


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Background

Male bias in traditional planning paradigms

- Planning is asserted to be “neutral”
- Planning targets a small group of the population:
 - 25-55 years old;
 - Androgynous (implicitly for men);
 - people of average height and reach (often male), and the highest sensory abilities.
- Even within this group, diversity exists - everyone has to adapt to the “default”.



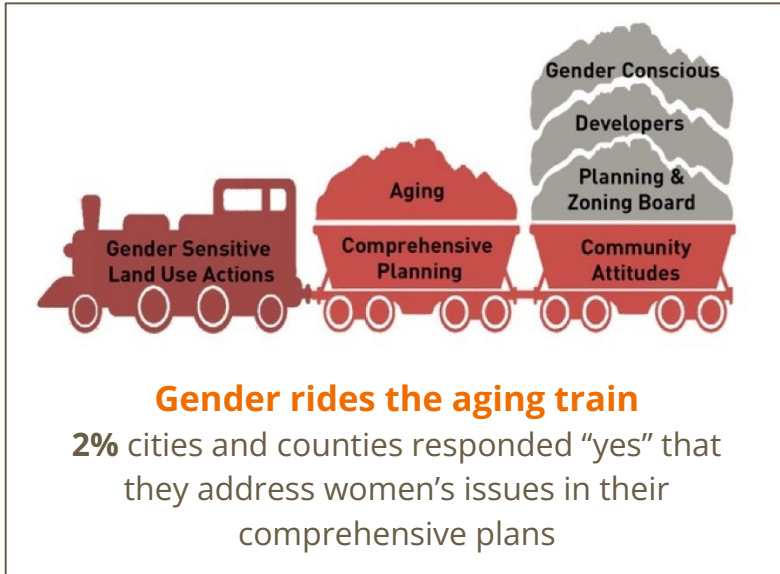
2019 U.S. Demographic data by gender



Background

Women's needs are often neglected

APA national survey in 2014¹



ICMA national survey 2019²

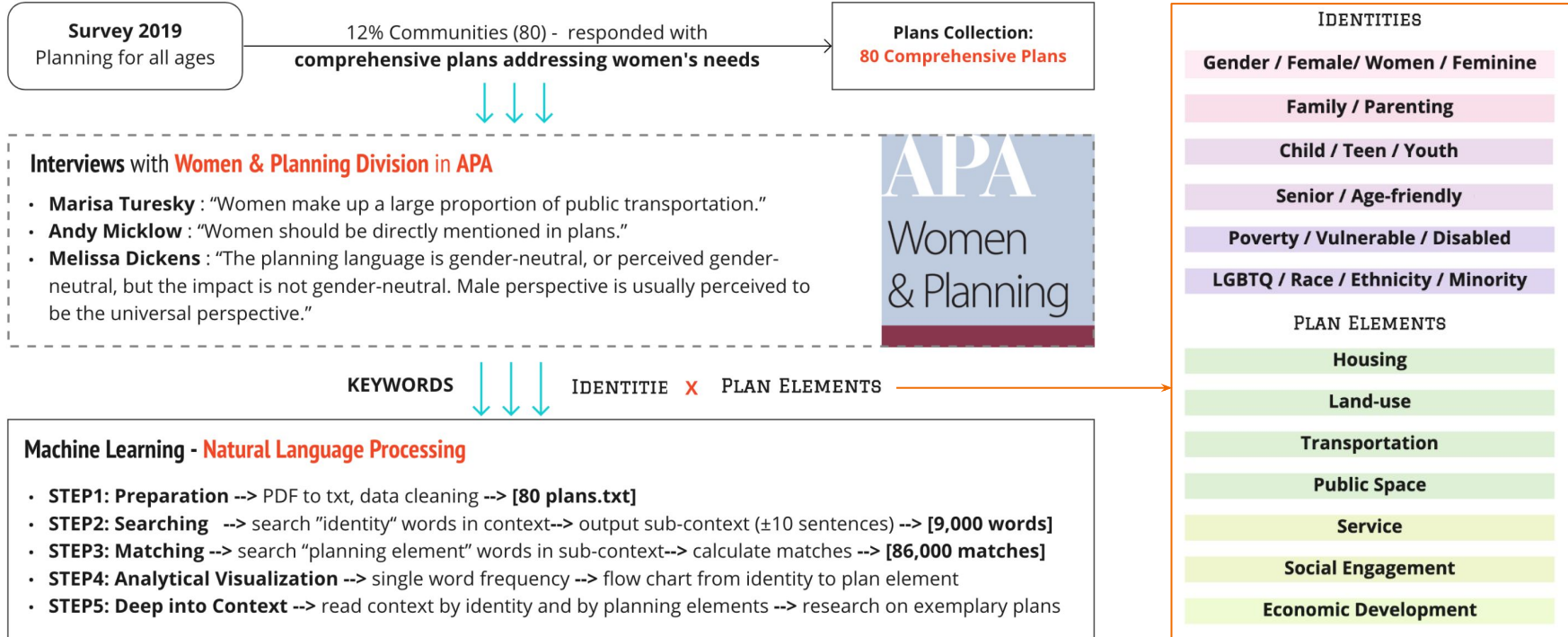


1. Micklow et al. 2015. "The Need to Plan for Women," Planning with a Gender Lens Issue Brief, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. 624 Planners, representing for 325 municipalities/counties across the US.

2. Warner, M.E. and Zhang, X. 2020. "Planning for All Ages: Survey Summary." 1312 US cities and counties.

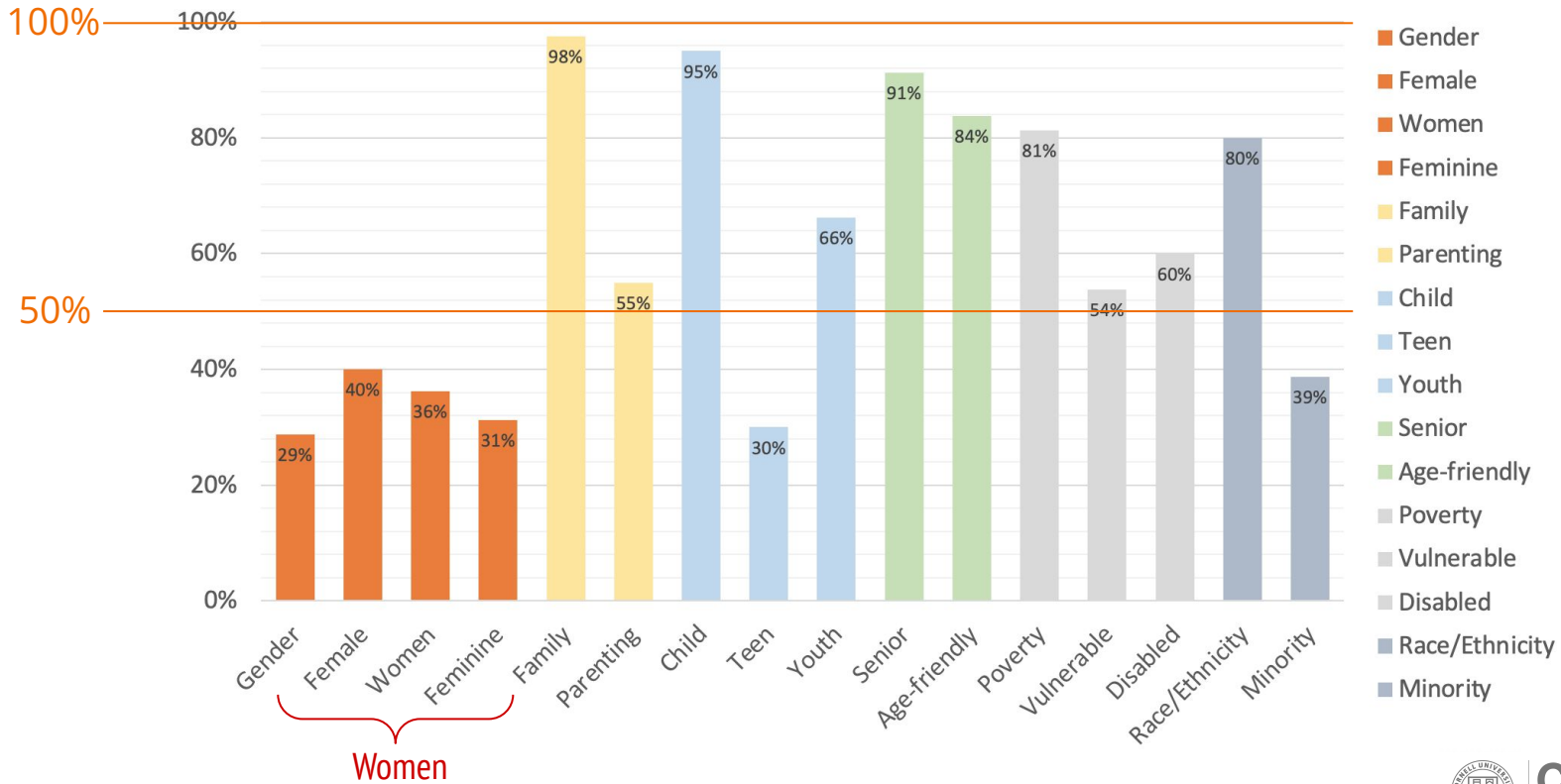


Methodology



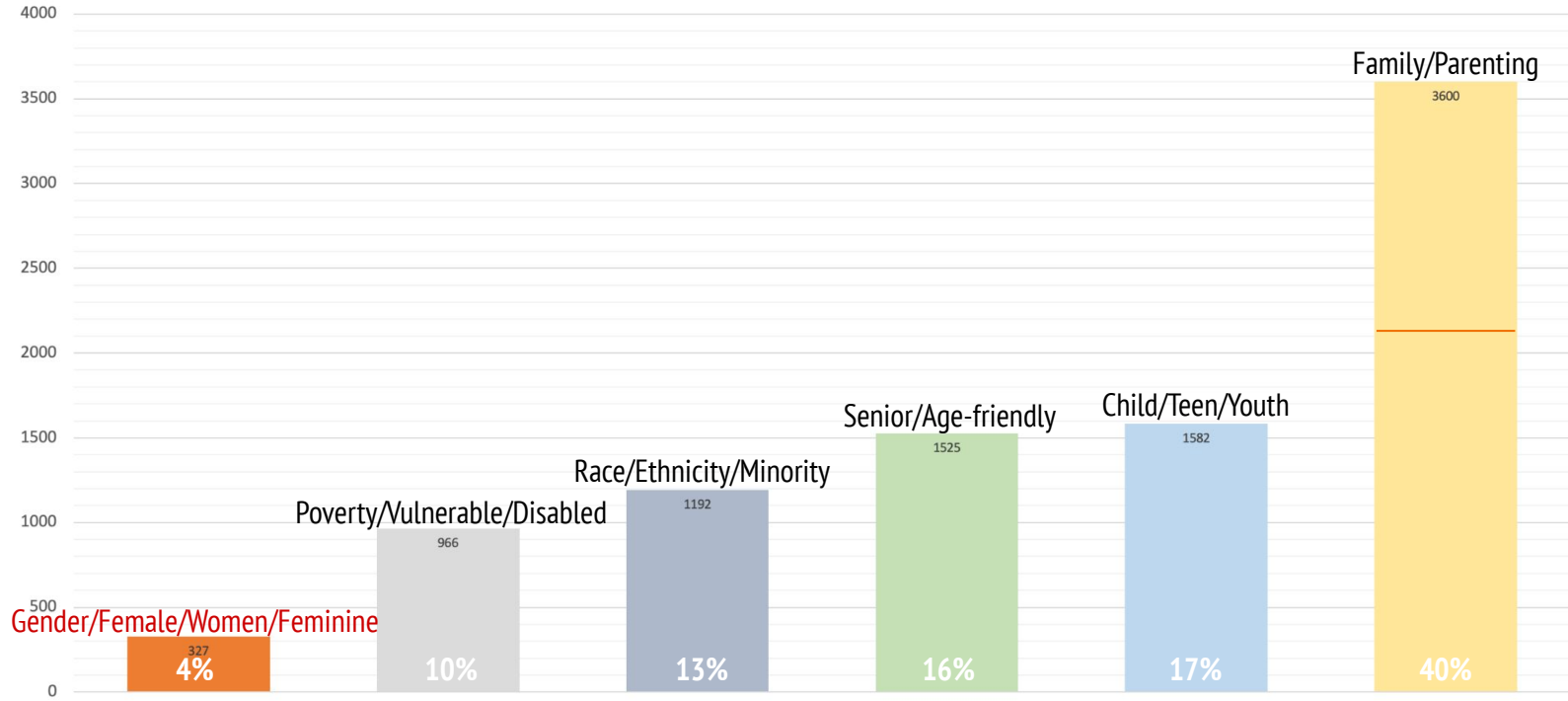
Analytical Result

How many plans mention the identities **at least once?** (in total 80 plans)



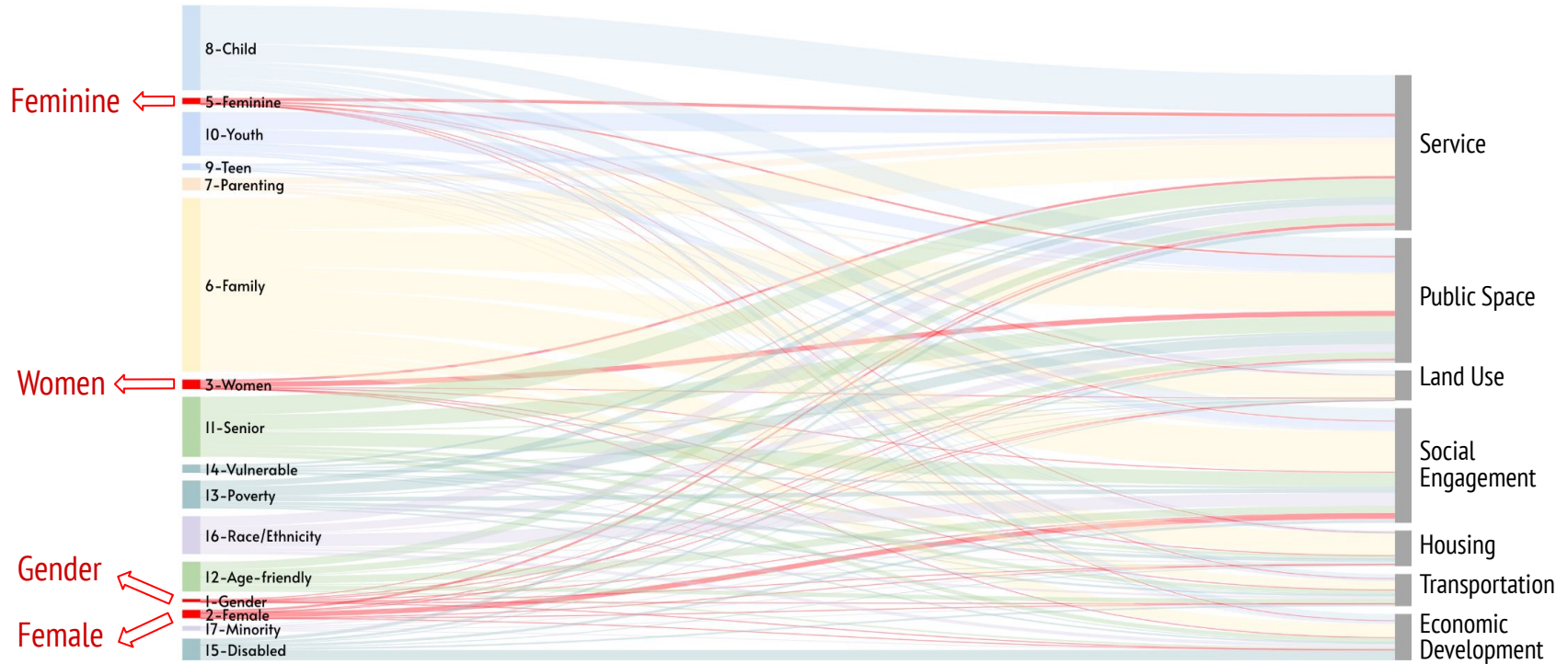
Analytical Result

Identities' **frequency** in 80 comprehensive plans (in total 9,000 words)



Analytical Result

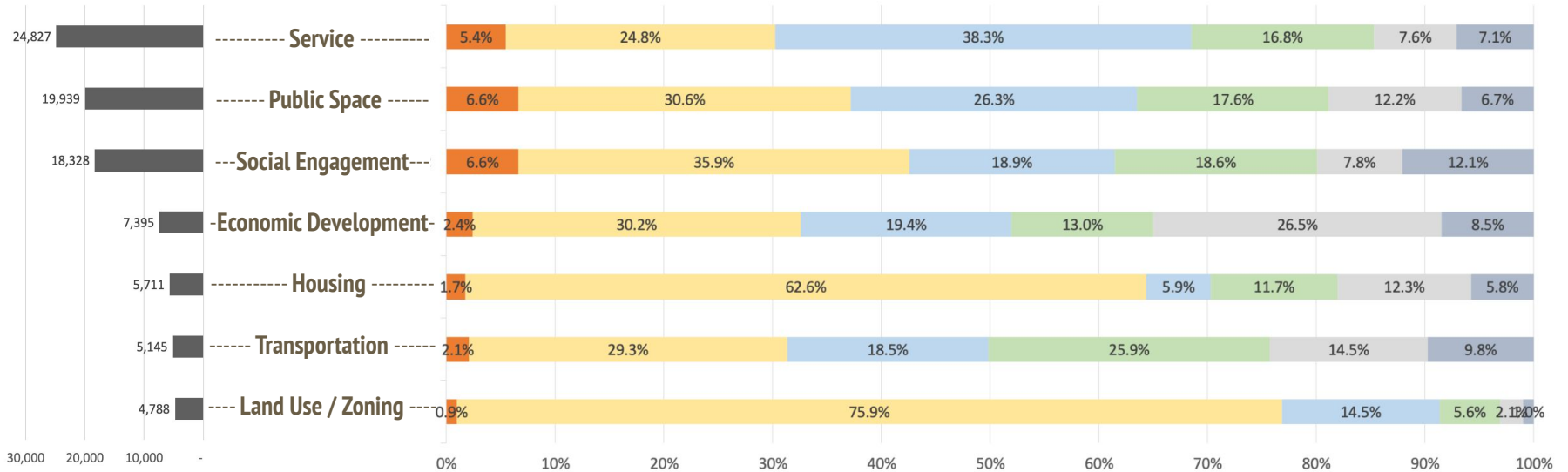
Connections between **Identities** and **Planning Elements** (in 86,000 matches)



Analytical Result **Planning Elements** frequency and **Identities** Distribution

Left: Frequency of Planning Elements

Right: Percentage of Identities Mentioned with Planning Elements



Gender/Female/Women/Feminine

Family/Parenting

Child/Teen/Youth

Senior/Age-friendly

Poverty/Vulnerable/Disabled

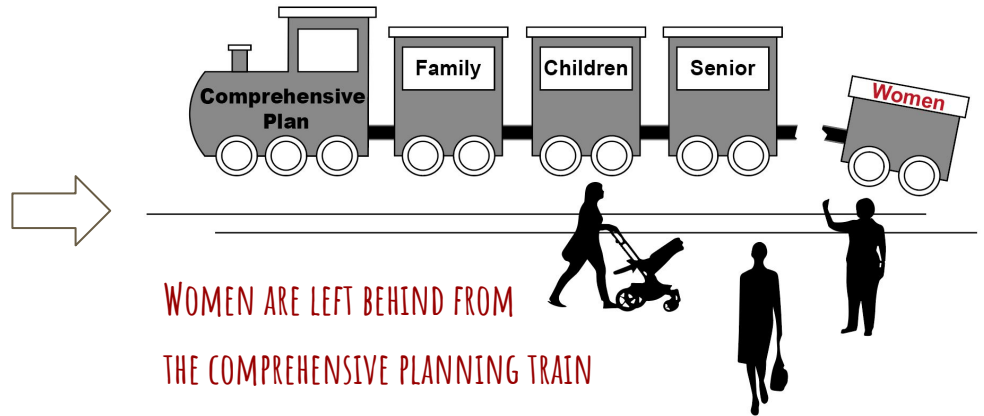
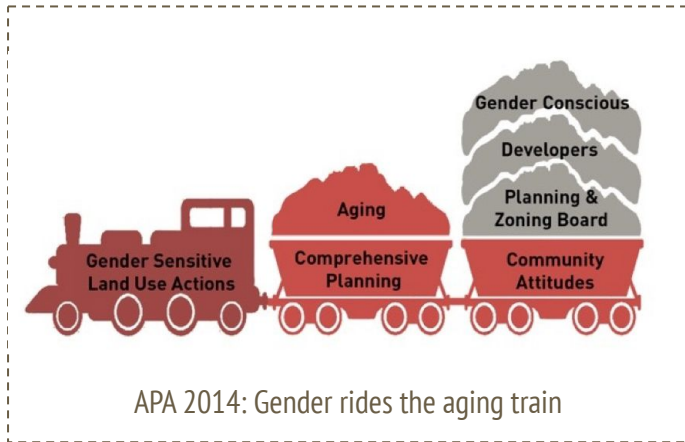
Race/Ethnicity/Minority



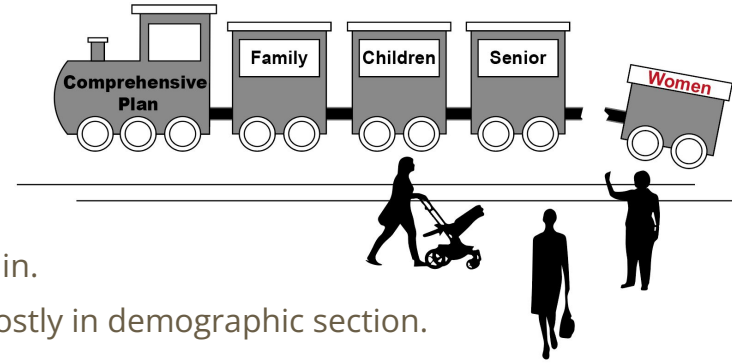
Takeaways

- **Neutral is not neutral**

- Women are left behind from the comprehensive planning train.
- Among all identities, women are mentioned the least, and mostly in demographic section.



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- **Neutral is not neutral**
 - Women are left behind from the comprehensive planning train.
 - Among all identities, women are mentioned the least, and mostly in demographic section.
- **Does gender ride the family/child/aging train?**
 - For all the lens of women's roles, women as care providers are considered most if addressed.
 - Women's needs might be addressed via aging, but family in plans is usually single-family housing, which does not address the diversity of the women's needs.
- **When can women get their own car?**
 - Women need to be more involved in the planning process.
 - Physical design issues such as safety, trip chaining, are rarely mentioned.
 - Economic development typically ignores care work.
 - Inattention to women's needs leads to their marginalization.
- **Comprehensive plans need to be updated**
 - Concepts like trip chaining, accessibility, care work, complete streets and universal design were not in many plans.



Thank you!

For more information please visit: <https://labs.aap.cornell.edu/local-government-restructuring-lab/student-work>

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