Testing the gender and health paradox: insights from a natural experiment

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Short Abstract

Healthy life expectancy – or its equivalents – as a measure combining information on health and mortality is a valuable instrument when studying the gender and health paradox. We estimate the gender gap in healthy life years at age 50 for different health dimensions and decompose it into its health and mortality effects. Existing research is extended by analyzing results for a sample of Catholic order members in Germany and Austria—where women and men’s lives are more homogenous than in other settings and who experience less excess male mortality—and other subpopulations with different extents of the gender gap in comparison to the total general population. We expect to find evidence that the gender and health paradox is not so paradoxically after all. Observed results could indeed be more in accordance with the expectations of the “longevity hypothesis”, that posits that women have poorer health not in spite of living longer, but because they live longer than men.

Full paper is available on request.
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