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Explaining new trends in the gender gap of mortality: Insights from a regional trend- analysis of the Netherlands

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Abstract

The recent decrease of the male-female mortality gap in Western Europe has been accompanied by changes in the life style, educational level, family roles and employment of women. In this paper we try to find out whether a relationship indeed exists between the increase in gender equality and the decrease in the male/female mortality difference. We used regional-level data for the Netherlands for the periods 1980-83 and 1996-99 on gender differences in life expectancy, by age group and cause of death, and various measures of gender inequality on the same regional level. In doing this we followed as far as possible a framework recently developed by Ingrid Waldron to analyse changes in gender differences in mortality in the US. The cross-sectional analyses showed that in 1980-83 it was rather socioeconomic than gender role variables that were important in explaining gender difference in mortality, while in the period 1996-99, it was the other way around.

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