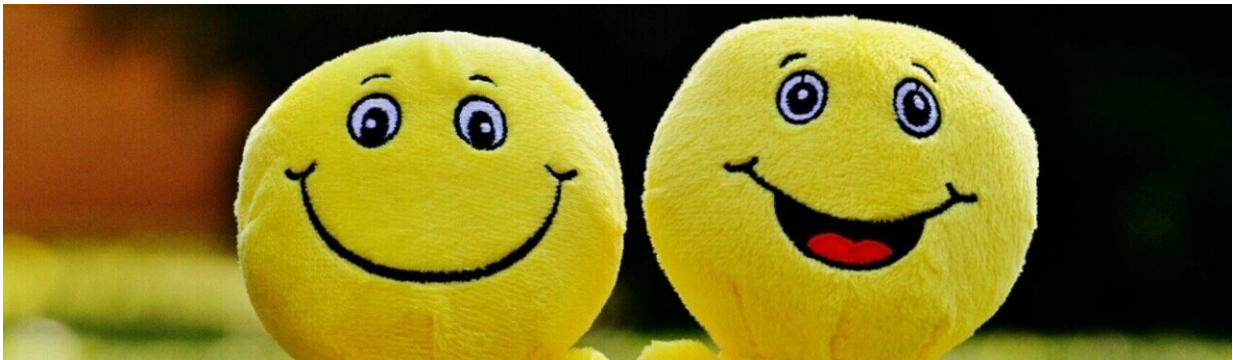


Men and women live longer in countries with higher gender parity

March 6 2020, by Brad Smith



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In advance of International Women's Day (Sunday, March 8), new research from the WORLD Policy Analysis Center at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health (WORLD) shows that in countries where gender parity is high, both men and women live longer than in countries where equality is low.

Specifically, countries where educational [gender](#) parity is higher could expect years of greater life expectancy for both men and women, along with significantly fewer maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. A separate but related measure of women's participation in the labor force suggests that increased gender parity in the workplace is also associated with a lower national maternal mortality rate and significant extensions

to female life expectancy.

"This study marks an important step in quantitatively debunking the notion that women's improved [social standing](#) and access to secure livelihoods come at men's expense. Our research suggests that both men and women can gain from such shifts," said Dr. Jody Heymann, founding director of WORLD and a UCLA distinguished professor of public health, [public policy](#) and medicine. "Additionally, male life expectancy may potentially be extended through educational equality."

The study is scheduled for online publication March 5 in *EClinicalMedicine*, a medical journal published by *The Lancet*. Heymann and co-author, Dr. Adva Gadoth, a former Hilton Fellow at WORLD and current postdoctoral scholar at the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, found the results held true in measures of both educational and work equality. These are defined as the overall proportion of girls or women participating in each area out of a total age-eligible population of females at the national level, and how that compares with those for boys or men in the same country.

A 10% increase in the authors' newly developed educational parity index – equivalent to a 4.9% increase in a country's gross annual school enrollment across primary and secondary schools and higher education – is associated with two years of greater female life expectancy, and almost a year greater male life expectancy at birth, even after accounting for individual countries' GDP, unemployment rates, urbanization, and domestic government health expenditures.

The same 10% increase in a country's educational parity was also associated with a reduction of almost 60 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births nationally. The educational parity index is defined as the average product of a country's female-to-male enrollment ratios and female enrollment rates across all levels of schooling.

Separately, a 10% increase, this time in female labor force participation, is associated with 15 fewer [maternal deaths](#) per 100,000 [live births](#), and almost a full year's extension of female life expectancy at birth, with no effect on male life expectancy. The work parity index is defined as a given country's average female-to-male ratios of professional, technical, and managerial workers, and total female [labor force](#) participation.

The researchers said the work so far suggests that increases in gender equity can pay off beyond the realm of education and work.

"Improving gender equality through policy and other programmatic interventions is a win-win," Gadoth said. "Our research shows that increasing women's participation in society at large can have broad, positive impacts on population health in addition to reducing poverty, promoting human rights, and increasing people's personal agency around the globe."

More information: Gender parity at scale: Examining correlations of country-level female participation in education and work with measures of men's and women's survival. *EClinicalMedicine*.

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