

VID-Colloquium

Sex Differences in Morbidity and Mortality: How Much is Explained by Behavior?

Johannes Schünemann - University of Goettingen, Germany

Holger Strulik - University of Goettingen, Germany

Timo Trimborn - Vienna University of Technology, Austria

Tuesday, 21 June 2016

3:00 - 4:00 pm

In developed countries, women are expected to live about 4-5 years longer than men. In this paper we develop a novel approach in order to gauge to what extent gender differences in longevity can be attributed to gender-specific preferences and health behavior. For that purpose, we set up a physiologically founded model of health deficit accumulation and calibrate it using recent insights from gerontology. From fitting life cycle health expenditure and life expectancy we obtain estimates of the gender-specific preference parameters. We then perform the counterfactual experiment of endowing women with the preferences of men. In our benchmark scenario this reduces the gender gap in life expectancy from 4.6 to 1.3 years. When we add gender-specific preferences for unhealthy consumption, the model can motivate up to 88 percent of the gender gap. Our theory offers also an economic explanation for why the gender gap declines with rising income.

About the presenter

Johannes Schünemann studied Economics and Business Administration at the University of Hannover (Germany) and obtained his Master of Science degree in 2013. In the same year, he joined the University of Goettingen (Germany). He started his PhD studies at the chair of Macroeconomics and Development and is supervised by Prof. Dr. Holger Strulik. His main research interest lies in the field of Health Economics. In his thesis, he is mainly investigating the facets of human aging and its impact on the life cycle behavior of individuals.