

Exploring Population Heterogeneities Poster Presentation Information

Title: Inequalities in dual-function life expectancy by education and gender

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Short Abstract

This study investigates gender- and education-based inequalities in dual functionality, a new concept that captures a combination of physical and cognitive functioning, both of which are important for independent living and quality of life. Using data from the Health and Retirement Study and the National Health Interview Study Linked Mortality Files, we define a measure of dual functionality based on the absence of limitations in activities of daily living and dementia. We estimate dual-function rates (percent free of limitations) and age-65 dual-function expectancy (2FLE) by gender and education. At ages 65-69 only about 67 percent of women with less than a high school degree manifest dual functionality as compared with over 92 percent of women with at least a four-year college degree. These education-based gaps in dual functionality remain across later life, even as dual-function rates decline at ages 85 and older to 32 and 55 percent respectively for women with less than a high school degree versus those with at least a four-year degree. The lower dual-function rates among women and men with less education translate into inequalities of about 7 years in age-65 2FLE between older adults with at least a four-year college degree compared to older adults with less than a high school degree for both women and men. Older adults, particularly women, with less than a high school degree are estimated to live a smaller percentage of their remaining years with dual functionality compared with older adults with at least a college degree. These inequalities have implications for the distribution of caregiving resources of individuals, family members, and the broader health care community.