

ALPHA Newsletter



Welcome to the first edition of LSE ALPHA News

The LSE ALPHA research unit undertakes and promotes quantitative research on lifecourse, socio-economic and intergenerational influences on individual and population health using a range of large scale, predominantly longitudinal datasets.

LSE ALPHA brings together researchers working on a number of projects, including three research programmes funded by the European Research Council, these are summarised on page two.

Latest news

LSE ALPHA and KCL Global Ageing and Health Seminar Series

The LSE ALPHA research group held the first session of their joint seminar series with the KCL Institute of Gerontology "LSE ALPHA/KCL Global Ageing and Health Seminar". The first seminar was presented by Professor Jean-Marie Robine (INSERM & EPHE, Paris and Montpellier), who gave a fascinating talk on the revolution of adult longevity. More details can be found on the [ALPHA website](#).

Forthcoming events

What is Population Ageing and what drives it?

Date: Wednesday 4th May 2016

Time: 2pm welcome tea/coffee, seminar starts at 2.30pm

Location: Room S2.30, Second Floor Strand Building, Strand Campus, Kings College London

Speaker: [Professor Mike Murphy](#)

Is Life Expectancy Really Falling for the Least Educated? Challenges in Measuring Trends in Health Disparities.

Date: Wednesday 15th June 2016

Time: 2pm welcome tea/coffee, seminar starts at 2.30pm

Location: OLD 3.28, London School of Economics

Speaker: [Professor Jennifer Dowd](#)



This issue:

An Introduction to ALPHA

Latest news and events

ALPHA Projects

This newsletter is also published on the ALPHA website: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/socialPolicy/Researchcentresandgroups/ALPHA/ALPHA.aspx>

Editors:

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Kavita is the Project Manager of the FAMHEALTH project and is based at the ALPHA research unit the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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The ALPHA projects have received funding from the European Research Council.



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ALPHA Projects

LSE ALPHA brings together three research programmes funded by the European Research Council.

COSTPOST: Costs and Gains to Postponement: How Changes in the Age of Parenthood Influence the Health and Well-being of Children, the Parents, and Populations

Principal Investigator: Professor Mikko Myrskylä

Advanced maternal and paternal ages are associated with a range of negative outcomes for the offspring, and have been estimated to have population-level health effects comparable to those of obesity. We analyse the health and well-being consequences of parental age at birth on both adult offspring and the parents themselves, focusing on three unanswered questions that illustrate both the costs and gains of postponement. Project A asks whether the association between parental age and offspring outcomes is causal. Existing literature overlooks important confounders, yet the reason to care about the association is its potential causality. We analyse large data sets from Europe and the U.S. with innovative methods that allow controlling for unobserved parental characteristics to test the causality of the advanced parental age-offspring outcomes association, and estimate the population-level health impact of fertility postponement using the new causal estimates. Project B analyses the modifying effect of the environment in the parental age-offspring health association. We hypothesize that since health improves over cohorts, postponement of parenthood—which means that the child is born to a later cohort—could improve offspring outcomes. This innovative hypothesis is controversial and has not been tested before.

FAMHEALTH: Family life courses, intergenerational exchanges and health and well-being in later life

Principal Investigator: Professor Emily Grundy

The overall aim of this research programme is to uncover how family life courses influence health and well-being in later adulthood, whether family related strengths or disadvantages relevant to health offset or compound socio-economic sources of disadvantage, and the extent to which these associations are influenced by societal factors. An important element will be to consider the role of intergenerational influences, including support flows. The geographical focus will be on Europe and the methodological focus on the advanced quantitative analysis of large scale longitudinal data sets. These data sets, chosen for their complementary strengths, will include both country specific and cross national sources. Three major interlinked strands of work will be undertaken. These will focus on 1) Impacts of parenting and partnership histories on health and mortality in mid and later life. 2) Intergenerational support exchanges: demographic, cultural and policy influences and effects on health of both providers and receivers. 3) An overarching theme to be addressed in the above strands and consolidated in the third is how investments in family and social networks are related to socio-economic disparities in later life health and mortality. The programme is will bring together perspectives from a range of disciplines to address issues of great relevance to current policy challenges in Europe.

HEALTHCYCLE: Economic Cycles, Employment and Health: Disentangling Causal Pathways in a Cross-National Study

Principal Investigator: Dr Mauricio Avendano

Research in economics suggests that business cycles are associated with population health: Physical health deteriorates during economic expansions and improves during recessions. At odds with these findings, research in epidemiology suggests that in the long-run, individual unemployment and job insecurity are associated with poor health and higher mortality. Studies on the impact of economic cycles have been hampered by the lack of individual panel data to unravel causal mechanisms. This project aims to advancing understanding by examining the short-term and long-term effects of historical economic fluctuations on individual health. The project expands previous research by exploring potential mechanisms, identifying heterogeneous effects across individuals, and comparing countries with distinct welfare policies and institutions. The research approach is based on a unique linkage of historical data on macroeconomic cycles with (a) detailed life history event and panel micro-data on employment and health for 18 countries recently collected in the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE), the English Longitudinal study of Ageing (ELSA) and the US Health and Retirement Survey (HRS); (b) mortality registry data individually linked to occupational histories from national census for entire populations in five European countries in the period 1960-2005; (c) US survey-mortality linked data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). The project integrates insights and methodologies from epidemiology and economics, elucidating the pathways through which economic fluctuations influence health in societies with different institutions.