

Life expectancy differences related to socioeconomic position: The contribution of eight risk factors

“A substantial reduction of inequalities in life expectancy requires policy actions on a broad range of health determinants”

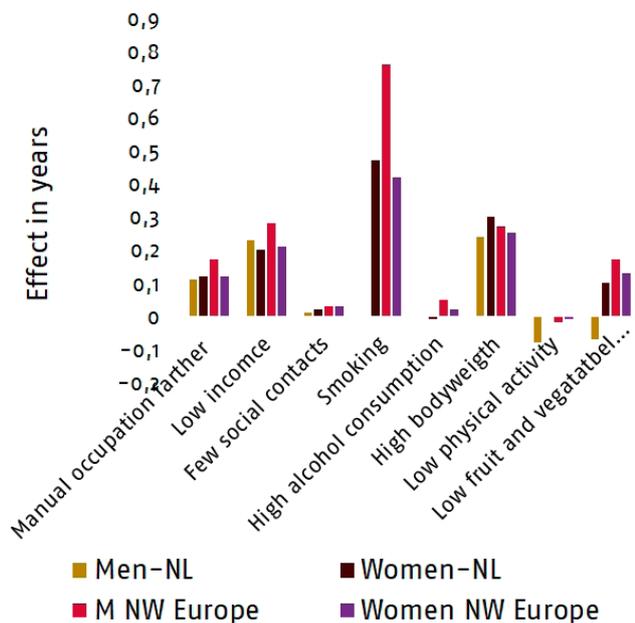
Wilma Nusselder, Jose Rubio Valverde and Johan Mackenbach – Erasmus MC

This study assessed the effect of different risk factors on life expectancy differences between men and women in the Netherlands aged 35 to 80 years with a high or low education. The data were compared with figures for Northwest Europe. Risk factors considered were manual profession father, low income, few social contacts, smoking, high alcohol consumption, little exercise and low fruit and vegetable consumption.

Principal Findings

- In the Netherlands, men with a high education live on average 2.3 years longer than men with a low socioeconomic position between age 35 and 80. For women, this figure is 1.4 years.
- For Northwest Europe, the figure for men is slightly higher than in the Netherlands, and for women, it is about the same.
- The biggest risk factor for the life expectancy gap is smoking, followed by high body weight and low income.
- In addition to health behaviours also material circumstances and to a lesser extent conditions experienced in childhood contribute to life expectancy differences.
- A future increase in the life expectancy gap is not certain, but neither can it be excluded.

Contribution risk factors to inequality in life expectancy 35–80 year



Key Takeaways for the Industry

- Not only health behaviours, but also material circumstances and circumstance during childhood explain the gap in life expectancy between the lower and higher educated.
- A substantial reduction of inequalities in life expectancy requires policy actions on a broad range of health determinants.



Want to know more? Read the paper

'Educational differences in life expectancy: The contribution of eight risk factors' (Dutch only)