

WWZ Research Seminar

Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Basel

Tuesday, November 2, 2021, 12:30, seminar room S 13, HG, WWZ

Prof. Dr. Iris Kesternich, KU Leuven

“In good and bad times - associations of spousal health and the role of assortative matching on early-life factors in Europe” joint with Bettina Siflinger and James P. Smith

Abstract

In this paper, we analyze spousal associations in late-life spousal health, both physical and mental, in a sample of elderly Europeans from the Survey of Health and Retirement in Europe. We document that correlations between couples' health is strong and exhibits strong regional differences. Health associations among couples are strongest in the South, followed by Central Europe, and they are lowest in Northern Europe. We investigate the role of assortative matching on early-life factors to explain both associations in late-life health and their regional patterns. We estimate a matching model that allows for multiple continuous attributes. There is strong assortative mating on early-life factors, and it follows a similar regional pattern as associations in spousal health. By linking our matching estimates to spousal health correlations, we find that matching on early-life factors explains only little of the variation in late-life spousal health associations. This is in line with research showing that matching on early-life factors matters more for health correlations in the early stage of marriage. We conduct a counterfactual analysis by imposing matching preferences from one region on couples in another region, showing that regional differences in spousal associations are indeed at least in part caused by differences in matching on early-life factors.

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