

Women may not live longer than men after all – study
‘Substantial chance’ married or university-educated men outlive women without spouse or high school diploma Between 25% and 50% of men have outlived women, according to academics in Denmark. [Nadeem Badshah](#) 3 Aug 2022 The Guardian

A study has called into question the long-held belief that women outlive men, especially men who are married or have a university degree.

The analysis spanning two centuries across all continents concluded that although men have a lower life expectancy than the opposite sex, they have a “substantial chance of outliving females”.

Between 25% and 50% of men have outlived women, according to the academics in Denmark, who highlighted that large differences in life expectancy sometimes mask substantial overlaps in lifespan between the sexes, and that summarising the average length of life can be a “simplistic measure”.

The study, published in the [BMJ Open journal](#), examined data on the lifespan of men and women across 199 countries for almost 200 years. It concluded that men have a high probability of outliving women, especially those who are married or have a degree.

“Males who are married or have a university degree tend to outlive females who are unmarried or do not have a high school diploma,” the authors said.

The analysis also found that in developed countries, the probability of men outliving women fell until the 1970s, after which it gradually increased in all populations. The rise and fall in the differences in life expectancy were mainly attributed to smoking and other behavioural differences. The research said: “A blind interpretation of life expectancy differences can sometimes lead to a distorted perception of the actual inequalities [in lifespan].”

It added: “Although male life expectancy is generally lower than female life expectancy, and male death rates are usually higher at all ages, males have a substantial chance of outliving females.

“These findings challenge the general impression that men do not live as long as women and reveal a more nuanced inequality in lifespans between females and males.”

The academics suggested that a better measure could be to examine the lifespan of both genders in different countries.