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Gender Disparity in Life Expectancy

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Abstract ∴ Life expectancy is the key metric to assess population health. It tells us the average age of death in a population. People undeniably live longer today than they did in the past. But for behavioural, biological, and other reasons, not everyone benefits equally from the gains in life expectancy. Women outlive men in almost every society. In more developed countries, the average life expectancy at birth is 79 years for women, 72 years for men. In less developed countries, where high maternal mortality reduces the difference in longevity, women can expect to live an average of 66 years, compared with 63 years for men (PRB). India's life expectancy may have more than doubled since independence. Indeed, the globalization of modern medicine and medical practices has globalized high life expectancy too (TOI). According to the latest WHO data published in 2020 life expectancy in India is : male 69.5 female 72.2 and total life expectancy is 70.8 which gives India a world life expectancy ranking of 117. The present paper aims to examine the causes for gender disparity in life expectancy. The infant and child mortality rates in India have decreased. These two factors both played a role in the rise in life expectancy.

Key words: Life Expectancy, Gender, Longevity.

Introduction : The term life expectancy refers to the number of years a person can expect to live. Life expectancy for both men and women has improved greatly in the past 20 years. Women have a longer life expectancy than men. Life expectancy is a measure that is often used to gauge the overall health of a country. Life expectancy at birth measures health status across all age groups. Shifts in life expectancy are often used to describe trends in mortality. As per the latest report titled Sample Registration System (SRS) based Abridged Life Table 2016-20 published by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Government of India, the average life expectancy at birth for male has increased from 50.5 years during 1970-75 to 68.6 years during the year 2016-20 and for females it has increased from 49.0 years to 71.4 years.

The life expectancy has improved as a result of numerous medical and healthcare advancements. India's life expectancy in 1950 was 35.21 and it will be 81.96 in the year 2100. Increased medical care, better diets and healthier lives have all contributed to higher life expectancy statistics. People have access to clean water, antibiotics, vaccines and plentiful and nutritious food. People are also more aware of the benefits of exercise and wise life style decisions. Cleanliness, improvements in living conditions, better sewage systems reducing the risk of disease and even death. The creation of vaccination is one of the most crucial. Millions of people died every year from diseases like Smallpox and Polio before immunizations were developed. In many nations of the world vaccinations have eradicated certain diseases significantly lowering mortality rates. World Health Statistics 2021 report finds that in India, overall life expectancy was at 70.8 years, but healthy life expectancy was at 60.3 years, trend common to other countries.

Causes for Gender disparity in Life Expectancy

Women live longer than men in almost every society due to biological, cultural and behavioural differences between men and women.

1. **Dangerous Jobs:** In many dangerous occupations such as fire fighting, military combat, construction work, driving, rescue, police work- men far outnumber women by a considerable margin.
2. **Risk Taking:** Boys and men tend to underestimate risks. They take more frequent and more dangerous risks. Hormonal differences may make men more prone to taking risks. Women systematically overestimate risk of any kind, while men consistently underestimate it. Among drivers, men more commonly break rules. Accidents are far more common among men than women. Testosterone puts men at risk biologically. It increases aggressiveness and in a cascading effect, results in higher death rate from accidents and homicide.
3. **Cardiovascular Disease :** The female sex hormone estrogen is protective of cardiovascular disease and is partly responsible for the lower incidence of such diseases in women up until menopause. A woman's heart rate increases during the menstrual cycle, offering the same benefits as moderate exercises. The male sex hormone testosterone is higher in men and is associated with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease.
4. **Suicide:** Men have a higher rate of suicide than women. In most countries, men are more likely to die by suicide. One reason behind the high suicide rate among men is the high stigma about psychiatric disorders as well as mental health care use. When men experience stress they are at higher risk of mental health problems such as depression than women, possibly because they do not talk about their emotions and they do not seek care. Unemployment is a major cause of suicide globally.
5. **Social Connections:** People with fewer or weaker social connections tend to have higher death rates for reasons that are unclear and this tends to be men more often than women. People who are socially isolated experience worse mental and physical health and are more likely to die compared to their less isolated peers. Men experience more social isolation than women.
6. **Immune systems:** we need strong immune system for a healthy body. Immunity is a very complex biological system which recognizes bacteria, viruses and other pathogens and tries to get rid of them to keep us healthy. Research has repeatedly shown that women have a stronger immune response to infections. Females have better innate and adaptive immune responses to disease-causing pathogens than males. Females also produce better protective antibodies following vaccination against flu, yellow fever, dengue and viral infections. This may help them to fight with diseases and live longer.
7. **Avoid Doctors:** According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, men are far more likely to skip routine health screens and far less likely than women to have seen a doctor of any kind. Failing to seek treatment or to complete treatment for illness, injury or chronic conditions may make health outcomes worse for men. In general women are more health conscious and have higher awareness of physical and mental symptoms than men. They also are more likely to communicate their health problems or needs effectively.

Objectives : The objectives of the paper on “Gender Disparity in Life Expectancy ”

1. To study the trends in life expectancy
2. To find out the causes responsible for gender disparity in life expectancy

Review of Literature :

Saddaf Naaz Akhtar (2022) The study “Does greater longevity come with lower life disparity in India? A comparative study between Kerala and Delhi” found that the life disparity in Delhi is higher than that in Kerala. This is because infant mortality in Delhi is higher than in Kerala whereas old age mortality is higher in Kerala than in Delhi.

Yatishkumar (2019) Worldwide, the major causes of population ageing are declining fertility and mortality with higher life expectancy of birth. Excellent developments in medical sciences have enabled provision of healthier surviving opportunities throughout the entire spectrum of age cohorts. In India, the growth of the elderly population has been much faster than the growth of the general population.

Girimallika Borah (2021) Reduction in maternal , infant and child deaths as well as health equality for both genders especially in those age groups is pertinent. Women although have a biological advantage over males in longevity , lack of care and social norms in India are hindering the longevity potential of their women.

Methodology

The present study is based on the collection of data from secondary Sources. Secondary data is collected from the various published and unpublished records, census reports, books, magazines, Journals, Government reports , both printed and online.

Analysis & Discussions: Life expectancy is a measure of the average time a person is expected to live in a country. It is an important metric that assesses both a population's healthcare system and country's healthcare system. Life expectancy of women is higher than men both globally and in India. But life expectancy in India is less compared to the life expectancy in other countries. The gender gap in life expectancy is higher in other countries. The following table shows the ranking of life expectancy.

Gender wise Life Expectancy by Country 2023

country	Male	female
Hong Kong	82.38 years	88.17 years
Japan	81.91years	88.09years
Macao	81.73years	87.62years
Switzerland	82.42years	86.02years
Singapore	82.06years	86.15years
Italy	81.90years	85.97years
Spain	81.27years	86.68 years
Australia	82.08years	85.80years
Channel Islands	81.82years	85.31years
Iceland	82.15years	84.90years

Source: worldometers.info

The above table reveals that the gender gap in life expectancy in other countries is more compared to India.

Life Expectancy at Birth : It measures the average number of years a person is expected to live under prevailing mortality conditions. The following table shows gender wise classification of life expectancy at birth for major states in India.

Life Expectancy at Birth by Sex for Major States**Life Expectancy at Birth**

(In Years)

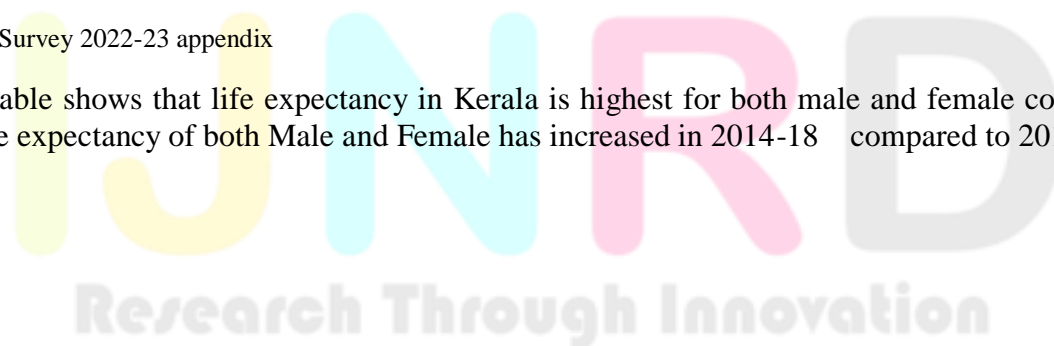
2010-14

2014-18

State	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Andhra Pradesh	66.3	70.8	68.5	68.7	71.4	70.0
Assam	62.7	65.5	63.9	66.1	67.9	66.9
Bihar	67.8	68.4	68.1	69.4	68.7	69.1
Gujarat	66.6	71.0	68.7	67.8	72.3	69.9
Haryana	66.3	71.3	68.6	67.7	72.3	69.8
Himachal Pradesh	69.3	74.1	71.6	69.6	76.8	72.9
Jammu & Kashmir	70.9	74.9	72.6	72.2	76.2	74.0
Karnataka	66.9	70.8	68.8	67.9	70.9	69.4
Kerala	72.0	77.8	74.9	72.5	77.9	75.3
Madhya Pradesh	62.5	66.0	64.2	64.8	68.5	66.5
Maharashtra	69.9	73.6	71.6	71.3	73.8	72.5
Odisha	64.7	67.1	65.8	68.0	70.8	69.3
Punjab	69.7	73.8	71.6	71.0	74.8	72.7
Rajasthan	65.5	70.2	67.7	66.5	71.6	68.7
Tamil Nadu	68.6	72.7	70.6	70.2	74.2	72.1
Uttar Pradesh	62.9	65.4	64.1	64.8	65.8	65.3
West Bengal	68.9	71.6	70.2	70.7	72.6	71.6
All India	66.4	69.6	67.9	68.2	70.7	69.4

Source: Economic Survey 2022-23 appendix

The above table shows that life expectancy in Kerala is highest for both male and female compared to other states. Life expectancy of both Male and Female has increased in 2014-18 compared to 2010-14.



The following table shows the values of the expectancy of life at birth for India by sex for the periods 1970-75 to 2016-20.

Expectation of life at birth by sex, India, 1970-75 to 2016-20*

Period	Total	Male	Female
1970-75	49.7	50.5	49.0
1976-80	52.3	52.5	52.1
1981-85	55.4	55.4	55.7
1986-90	57.7	57.7	58.1
1987-91#	58.3	58.1	58.6
1988-92#	58.7	58.6	59.0
1989-93#	59.4	59.0	59.7
1990-94#	60.0	59.4	60.4
1991-95#	60.3	59.7	60.9
1992-96#	60.7	60.1	61.4
1993-97#	61.1	60.4	61.8
1994-98#	61.4	60.6	62.2
1995-99#	61.5	60.8	62.3
1996-00#	61.9	61.2	62.7
1997-01#	62.3	61.4	63.3
1998-02	62.9	61.9	64.0
1999-03	63.4	62.3	64.6
2000-04	63.9	62.8	65.2
2001-05	64.3	63.1	65.6
2002-06	64.7	63.5	66.1
2003-07	65.0	63.7	66.5
2004-08	65.4	64.0	66.9
2005-09	65.7	64.3	67.2
2006-10	66.1	64.6	67.7
2007-11	66.5	64.9	68.2
2008-12	67.0	65.4	68.8
2009-13	67.5	65.8	69.3
2010-14	67.9	66.4	69.6
2011-15	68.3	66.9	70.0
2012-16	68.7	67.4	70.2
2013-17	69.0	67.8	70.4
2014-18	69.4	68.2	70.7
2015-19	69.7	68.4	71.1
2016-20	70.0	68.6	71.4

Source SRS based abridged life tables 2016-20, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi

The above table shows that the life expectancy at birth in 2016 -20 has been 68.6 for males and 71.4 years for females respectively. The increase in life expectancy has been 0.2 years for males and 0.3 years for females over 2016-20 from 2015-19. In 1970-75, life expectancy for males was 50.5 years and for females 49.0 years.

Conclusion: The life expectancy has increased across the world due to improved healthcare and treatments. Increased medical care, better diets and healthier lives have all contributed to higher life expectancy in India. The current life expectancy for India in 2023 is 70.42 years, a 0.33% increase from 2022. India is among the countries with the least difference in healthy life expectancy between men and women. Indian women's life expectancy is on an average 2-7 years longer than Indian men; however, the male-female difference in healthy life expectancy is just 0.1 years, showing that women in India do not necessarily lead healthier lives.

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