

Health and Subjective Wellbeing: The Role of Inequalities

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Abstract : We contribute to the subjective well-being literature testing the relationship between life satisfaction and inequality of opportunity in health, measured through the Human Opportunity Index calculated at the national level using individual socio-economic data from the cross-country European Social Survey sample. We compute several indexes of opportunity inequality in health, each obtained according to a different combination of circumstances (gender, immigrant status, parents' education). We find a robust and significant relationship where life satisfaction is higher in correspondence with low levels of health opportunity inequality. The result is twofold. On the one hand, the importance of the well-being of other types of inequality than income inequality emerges. On the other hand, the socioeconomic roots of inequality in health are investigated, suggesting that circumstances at birth have a role in future well-being. Several rationales for the nexus between life satisfaction and inequality of opportunity in health are possible, which we investigate by splitting the sample. Among others, we find a prominent role of pro-social preferences - formalized as interest towards own offspring (which can be interpreted as intergenerational justice) - as a mediating factor of the relationship.

Keywords : Inequality of opportunity, subjective wellbeing, health, health inequality, inequality of opportunity in health

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