

# Educated children help women live longer, study says

October 3 2018, by Shannon Thomason

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Women's education, occupation and wealth are related to the length of their lives, social scientists have found. Simply put, women who attain more generally live longer.

But a new study published in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* argues that longevity is not just about personal achievement—family matters, too.

Biographical information on 3,349 women between the ages of 30 and 44 in 1967, and who are now members of the growing elderly population in the United States, were examined by lead author Joseph D. Wolfe, Ph.D., assistant professor in the University of Alabama at Birmingham College of Arts and Sciences' Department of Sociology, and colleagues.

Results from the study suggest that women's mortality risk is related to their personal wealth, to their parents' occupations and to their adult children's educations.

"Survival is a family affair," Wolfe said.

The study also finds racial differences. While education lowered mortality risk for white women by assisting in [wealth accumulation](#), black women's education had no association with their [mortality risk](#). However, when Wolfe and colleagues considered adult children, they found that the education of [adult children](#) was a strong predictor of both black and white women's survival.

"This could mean that the education of [black women](#)'s children provides resources that their own education, in addition to the educational attainments of their parents and spouses, does not provide," Wolfe said.

This study also suggests a novel approach for reducing premature morbidity, disability and death among older adults.

"By 2050, the Census Bureau projects the number of persons age 65 and older will be 83.7 million. As the United States prepares for this increase in the population of [older adults](#), our findings suggest that social policies

aimed at addressing educational inequalities among children and adolescents from disadvantaged families may offer a potential path to reducing health disparities among the elderly," Wolfe said.

**More information:** Joseph D. Wolfe et al. Multigenerational Attainments, Race, and Mortality Risk among Silent Generation Women, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0022146518784596](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146518784596)

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

Citation: Educated children help women live longer, study says (2018, October 3) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-10-children-women-longer.html>

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