

Older men whose wives were main breadwinners suffered poorer health in later life

September 7 2017, by Ken Branson



Credit: George Hodan/public domain

Men who came of age in the 1950s, and whose wives were their families' main breadwinners, were more likely than their contemporaries to suffer poor health in later life according to a study by Rutgers-New Brunswick sociologist Kristen Springer. The study has been published in the *Journal of Aging and Health*.

"For men of that generation, being the primary breadwinner for one's family was central to their self-image," Springer said. "We found a high correlation between poorer health in later life and the inability to fulfill that role."

Springer and her co-authors, Chioun Lee of the University of Wisconsin and Deborah Carr of Boston University, used 30 years of income data from 1,095 couples contained in the Health and Retirement Study, a publicly available data set. They linked that data with the husbands' later-life health. They found that violating the masculine ideal of being the primary breadwinner was associated with poorer [health](#) as the men aged, particularly from heart and stress-related diseases.

"We studied men from a particular generation, and the cultural norms were different for them than they are for their sons and grandsons," Springer said. "The solution to the problem lies, not in forcing men and women to stick to the cultural norm of male breadwinning, but to adjust the cultural norm to real [life](#)."

More information: Kristen W. Springer et al. Spousal Breadwinning Across 30 Years of Marriage and Husbands' Health: A Gendered Life Course Stress Approach, *Journal of Aging and Health* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/0898264317721824](#)

Provided by Rutgers University

Citation: Older men whose wives were main breadwinners suffered poorer health in later life (2017, September 7) retrieved 18 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-09-older-men-wives-main-breadwinners.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.