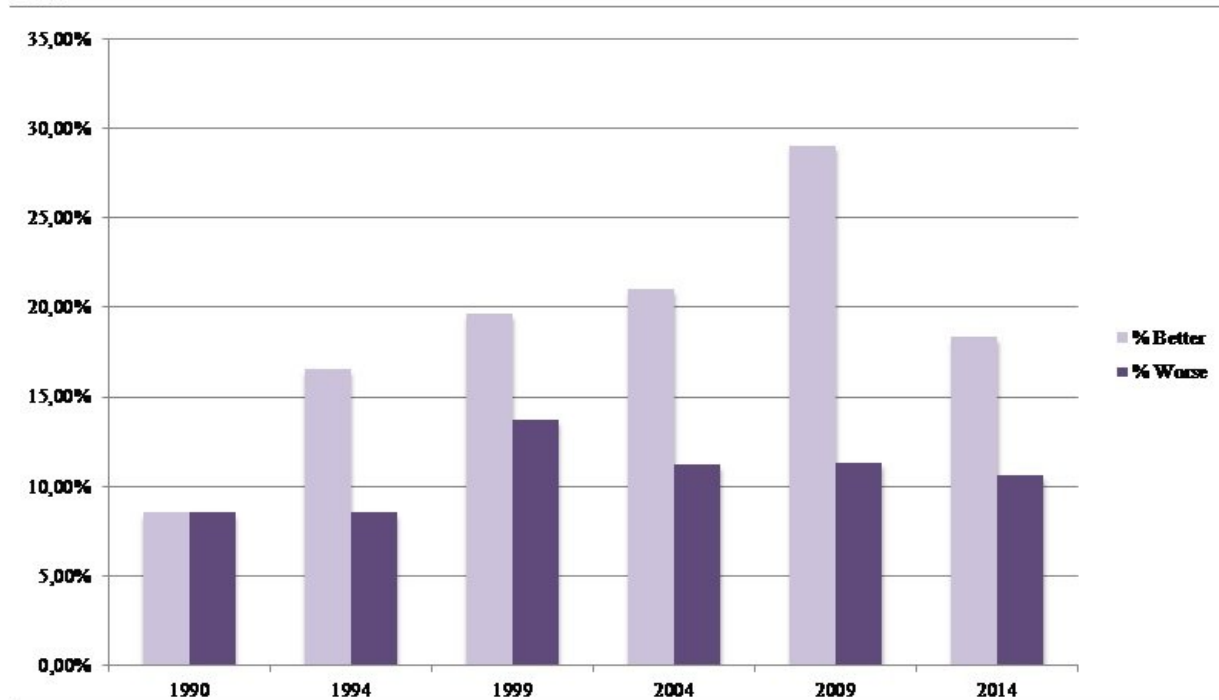


Women's health has worsened while men's health has improved, trends since 1990 show

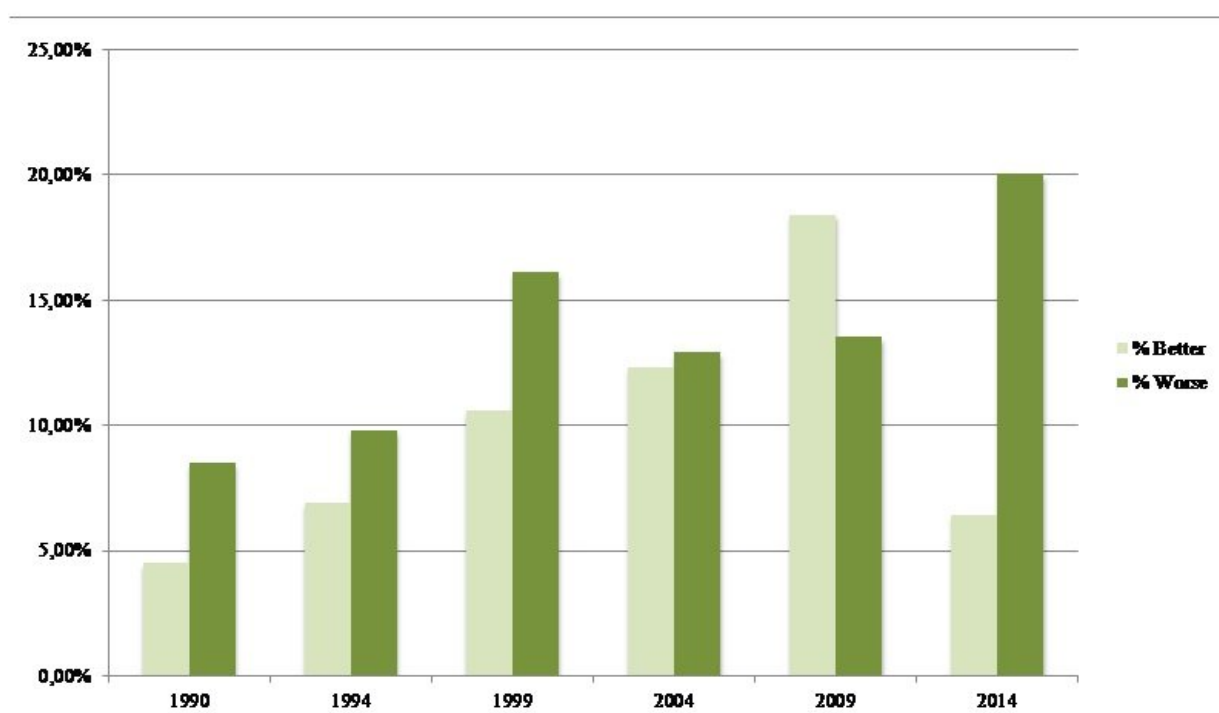
November 21 2017

Figure 1: Tidstrender för "Bättre" och "Sämre" självskattad hälsa 1990-2014.

Men



Women



Data från Norra Sveriges Monica Studie 1990-2014.

Trends indicating "worse" or "better" self-rated health 1990-2014. Light purple columns indicate better while dark purple columns indicate worse health among men according to a self-rated comparison with peers. For women the light green column indicates better while the dark green indicates worse. Data from Northern Sweden's MONICA study. Credit: Umeå University/*PLOS One*

Researchers at Umeå University and Region Norrbotten in Sweden have studied health trends among women and men aged 25-34 from 1990-2014. In 1990, 8.5 percent of women self-rated their health as being worse than peers in their own age group. At 2014, this trend had increased to 20 per cent of women. In contrast, a bigger part of the men self-rated their health as better at the end of the study period compared to the start. This according to a study published in *PLOS One*.

"In recent years, public debate has raised the issue of increased illness and sick leaves among [women](#). Our study now shows, for the first time, that there are corresponding [health trends](#) also among [young women](#)," says Annika Forssén, researcher at the Department of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, general practitioner and co-author of the article.

The researchers behind the study have, through a long-term, population-based survey, analysed answers from 1,811 people in the MONICA study in Northern Sweden. As a part of a standard health check, [study participants](#) answered a questionnaire which included questions about self-rated health.

The results also showed that an increased proportion of study participants indicated obesity, anxiety and dissatisfaction with their personal economy, among both women and men. Simultaneously, the proportion of women and men with high levels of physical activity increased over the period.

"A generally worsened self-rated health among young people most likely suggests increased risk of illness both in the short and long term. The results show that gender equality efforts, and especially the promotion of equal rights to health for men and women, need significant revisions," says Göran Waller, researcher at the Department of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, [general practitioner](#) and co-author.

According to the study authors, possible causes for this negative health trend among young women may be:

- Tougher working conditions in female-dominated professions such as in healthcare
- Increased risk of burnouts (stress-related exhaustion disorder) and stress of conscience
- Lack of equality in one's private life
- Men's violence against women
- Two conflicting but coinciding norm systems in society - equality and traditional gender roles - where women must fulfil expectation related to both ("manage everything")
- General societal expectations such as pressures to be both successful, socially active and physically attractive
- Self-confidence based on achievements and expected patterns of consumption

According to the researchers, some possible reasons for the positive development among men may be:

- In the labour market, men are still valued more highly than women despite having a lower level of education
- A more equal responsibility for children and the household is beneficial for men's [health](#)
- The equality norm opens up for more variation in the so-called masculine role

- Lesser ties to rigid masculine norms in the local community through the Internet

More information: Mattias Waller Lidström et al, Time trends of comparative self-rated health in adults aged 25-34 in the Northern Sweden MONICA study, 1990-2014, *PLOS ONE* (2017). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0187896](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0187896)

Provided by Umea University

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