

The Short-term Effects of Divorce on Self-Reported Health Status

Risa Griffin, Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Introduction

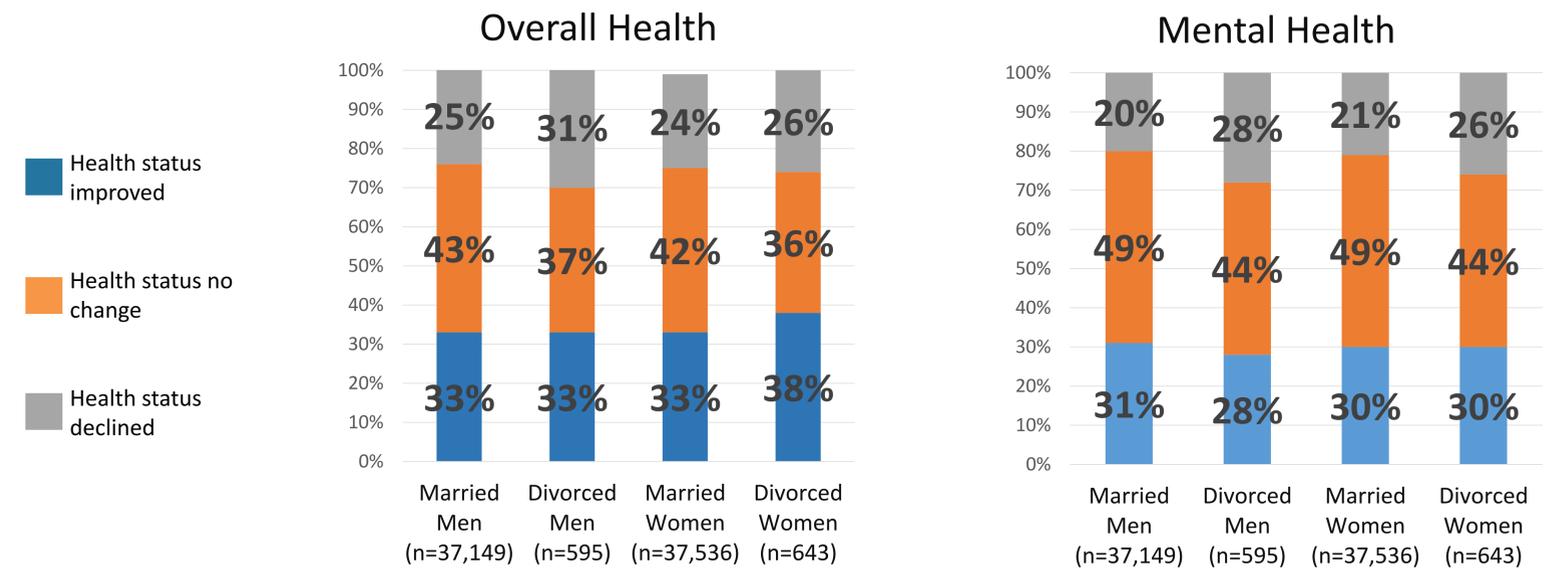
- Previous studies of the health effects of divorce have often been unable to follow divorced individuals longitudinally, to compare pre- and post-divorce health statuses, or to link previously married spouses to each other.
- This analysis uses data from the IPUMS NHIS and the MEPS that follow both members of a divorced couple over a three year period to examine the effect of divorce on self-reported overall and mental health status.

Data and Methods

- Data: The IPUMS Integrated version of the National Health Interview Series (IPUMS NHIS) and the household component of the Medical Health Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS), pooled for years 2000-2013.
- Key independent variable: experienced divorce during the 3 year survey period
- Dependent variables: Change in self-reported overall and mental health status.
- Multinomial logistic regression models were used to estimate effects.

Results

Change in self-reported health status over three year survey period, by marital status



Relative Risk Ratio from Multinomial Logistic Regressions of the Effect of Experiencing Divorce on Self-Reported Overall and Mental Health Status, Relative to No Change in Health Statuses



Conclusion

- In the short term, the correlation between divorce and negative effects on both mental and overall health is stronger for men.
- For both men and women, a recent divorce is associated with a larger change in self-reported mental health.
- Women who experienced a divorce during the survey period reported both improved and declined overall health.

Next Steps

- Linking individuals who experienced divorce during the survey period to their former spouse to examine correlations between changes in their health statuses.
- Using MEPS longitudinal design to explore changes to health status over time, relative to timing of divorce.

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