

# Inequality in old age cognition across the world

*This version: 07-March-2016. Full paper in preparation*

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## Abstract

What is commonly found in studies that look at later-life cognitive abilities is a strong effect of educational attainment on retarding the deterioration of such abilities. In this sense, education is a protective measure for cognition reserve. In a more aggregate perspective, we propose a measure of later-life cognition inequality per cohort in 27 countries with diverse degree of economic development and comparable cognition tests. We relate cognitive inequality with corresponding past inequalities in education in each country. The survival rate of the cohort is also included in linear regressions in order to disentangle the effects of age and education composition on cognition inequality. Our results show a sizeable positive effect of past educational inequalities on present inequality of old age cognition. Furthermore, the survival rate is positively associated with today's cognitive inequality. Surviving females bring such a relative cognitive profile into old age that this results in an increase of cognitive inequality. Therefore, countries that experienced a large gender gap in education are more prone to suffer more later-life cognitive inequality

Keywords: Old age, cognitive abilities, education, inequality

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