

Abstract

Using data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe, this paper provides empirical evidence for the Netherlands and Spain on the associations between individuals' early life circumstances—measured by health and socioeconomic status (SES) during childhood—educational attainment, and later life health and employment (at ages 50–64). We find that for both men and women in the Netherlands and Spain, favorable early life circumstances (i.e., better childhood health and higher SES) are associated with a higher level of education, which is in turn associated with better health later in life. This latter is also linked to early life circumstances conditional on educational attainment. For men only, favorable early life circumstances are associated with a higher incidence of later life employment, primarily because of better later life health. Our findings thus suggest that policies aimed at improving children's health and SES may have long-term benefits through increased individual educational attainment and later life health and employment.