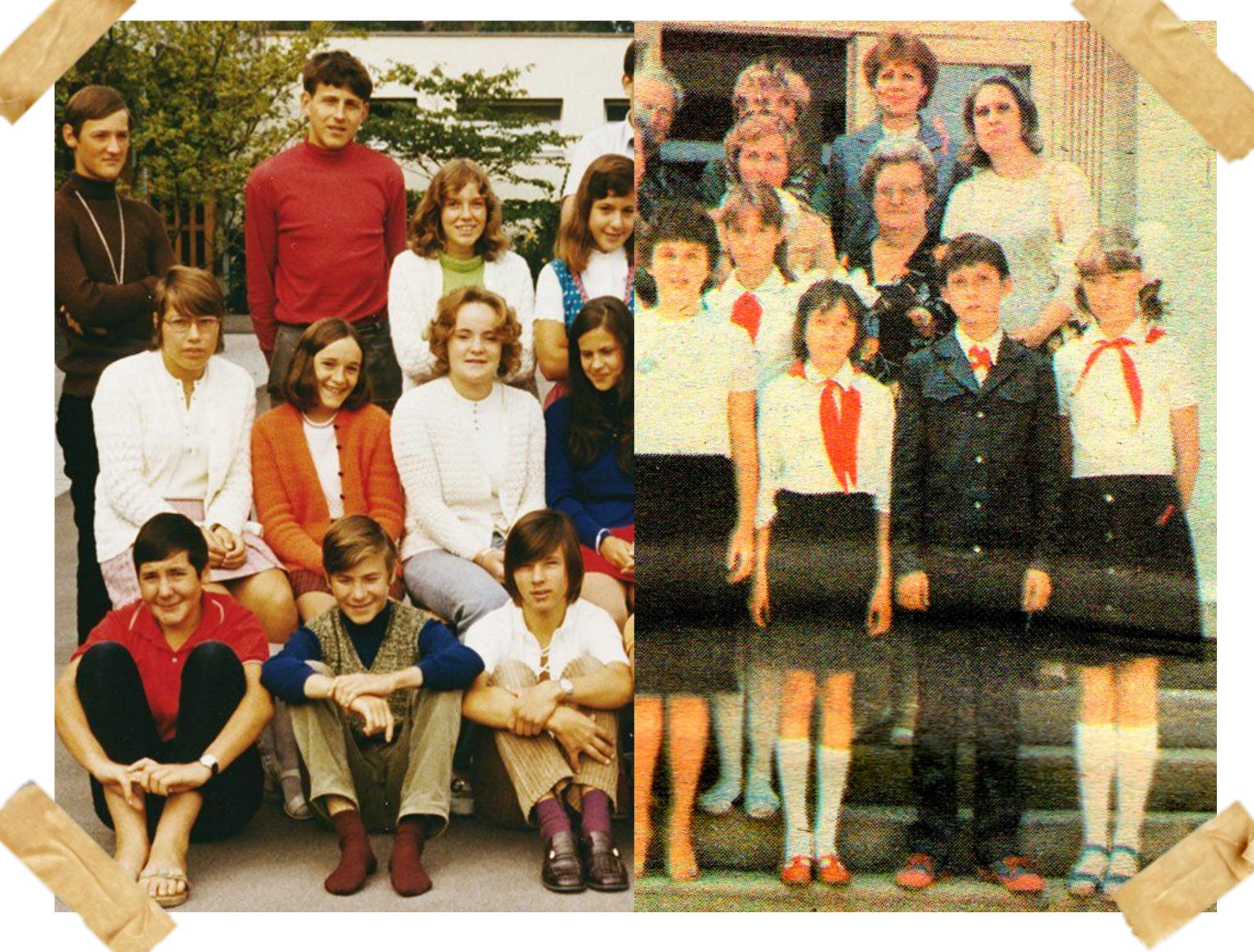


Are there still differences? Life course health of East and West Germans born before and after the German reunification.

Tobias Vogt^{1,2*}, Lara Bister^{1,3}, Mine Kühn^{4,5}

objective

Analysis of the life course health outcomes of East German cohorts exposed to the post-reunification period during the 1990s



Take-home-message: Long-term health disadvantage for East German women born during the transformation years in the 1990s.

Motivation

- German reunification in 1990 exposed hundred thousands of newborns, infants and children to major political, economic and societal transformations – but also drastic insecurity.
- East Germany suffered soaring and persisting unemployment, decreasing family stability, large outmigration streams.
- Nonetheless: health benefits of reunification for older adults (mortality improvements in East Germany).
- Understudied: comprehensive health assessment of the “reunification cohorts” = birth cohorts born shortly before and after the German reunification.

Data + Methods

Data: German Child Health and Development Survey (KIGGS)

Sample: n = 7,256 girls and boys born between 1985 and 1994 from East Germany (n = 2,391) and West Germany (n = 5,235) observed across 3 waves (2003-06, 2009-12 and 2014-17)

Health outcomes: 16 different health markers of physical health (self-rated and objective), mental health (self-rated and objective) and health behavior.

Analysis: Propensity Score Matching (PSM) with East German „treatment group“ matched to West German „control group“

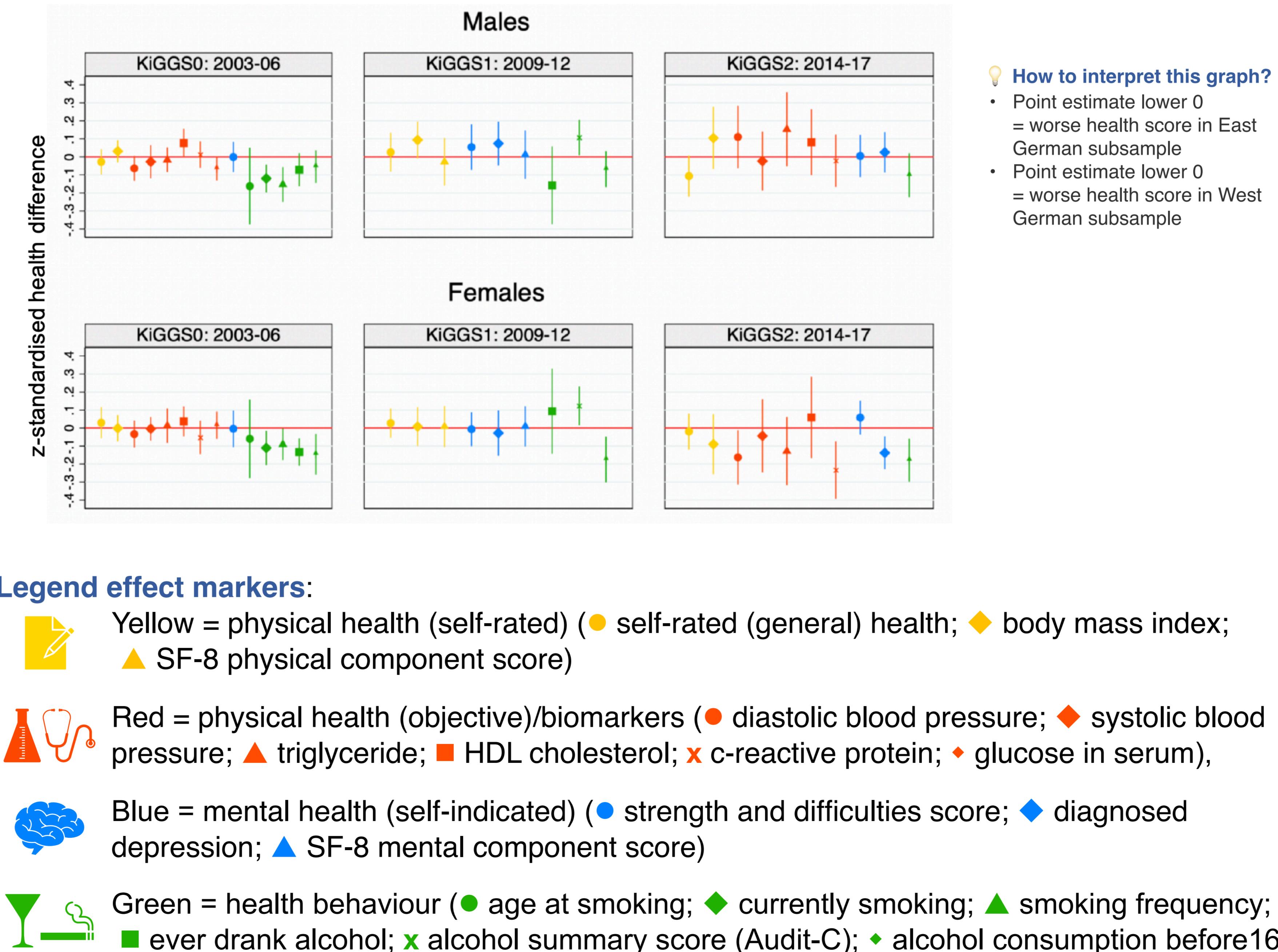


Matching variables: Maternal age at birth, age at health measurement, SES of parents, birthweight

Results

- Health differences persist for adolescent and young adult women in East German born during the societal transformation in East Germany.
- Males: mostly non-significant differences; differences mostly in behaviors (2003-06) and later on also self-rated health (2014-17)
- Females: more prominent and significant differences; differences mostly in mental health outcomes and behaviors: diagnosed depression, stress markers and smoking behavior, especially during early adulthood (2014-17)

Figure 1: Effect of the post-reunification years in East Germany on various health outcomes



Conclusion

- Contextual stress during societal transformation may have affected the health outcomes of East German cohorts during their adolescence and young adulthood
- Persisting long term health inequalities among girls born during transformation in the East especially in mental health outcomes
- Results may suggest internalization of ecological stress
- Post-reunification success of health convergence of older East German women might be reversed in the future
- Next steps to stratify by socioeconomic status

Get in touch! Download our poster, or connect with us by scanning the QR code:

