Part 2 - Response

Yuqi Liao

The claims made by the colleague about how long World Bank retirees live are problematic in many ways, as explained below.

First, assuming the information collected about all World Bank retirees who died within the past 6 years is accurate, this information is not the same concept as the life expectancy of all World Bank retirees, which should rely on information of both deceased individuals and those who are alive. In other words, what the distribution plot in the email does not include is information about all World Bank retirees who are still alive, and therefore the comparison made in the email is not a fair one.

Second, assuming the U.S. statistics mentioned in the email is from the U.S. Census or a nationally representative survey, when comparing a statistics about the U.S. population to a World Bank group’s population, the colleague needs to keep in mind that the two groups may have very different demographic, educational, geographical, or health characteristics. In the case of all World Bank retirees, or all World Bank employees, for that matter, it is reasonable to assume that the World Bank group’s population is more diverse and received more years of education, which may be associated with life expectancy. The likely possibility that the U.S. population does not represent the World Bank retirees population well makes the colleague’s claims less convincing.

Last, given that all World Bank retirees in the distribution have an average age of 81 years at death. When this cohort was in their 65 years old on average, it was approximately 16 years ago. Comparing the life expectancy without taking into account the year the two groups are in is not fair, as it is believed that life expectancy has been moving upward over the years.