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ONSET OF THE OLD-AGE GENDER GAP IN SURVIVAL

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Women outlive men almost anywhere in the world. The main explanations for the women's advantage, which relate to favorable differences in sex hormones and more reckless behaviors of men, display their strongest effect at young-adult ages. Therefore, one would expect these ages to be the main contributors to the current gender gap in life expectancy. However, an account of the present status in low mortality countries reveals that the largest sex difference in mortality occurs at very old ages. As survival patterns at old age are becoming more and more important in driving the overall mortality trends, old ages are likely to become crucial components of the gender difference in life expectancy. The aim of this paper is to analyze the role of old ages over time in determining the gender gap in life expectancy, to identify the onset of the old-age driven gender gap in survival and to investigate differences between countries.