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Kin networks in Finland

Kin is the most important source of social support and wellbeing across societies. Human kin networks vary in the presence and availability of living kin and are influenced by changes such as the ongoing demographic transition. This refers to long-term changes in fertility and survival rates in developed and high-income societies. One result of this demographic change is a narrowing of the available kin network over an individual's life course. Kin networks become more vertical, meaning they primarily consist of relatives from direct lines of descent. However, significant differences in kinship composition by kin type between individuals are likely to continue in such populations.

The Social Networks, Fertility and Wellbeing in Ageing Populations (NetResilience) consortium investigates demographic change from the perspective of social networks. NetResilience was launched in 2021 and will continue until 2027. So far, we have studied kin effects and kin networks in historical Finland, kin effects on fertility and wellbeing in contemporary societies, and many other topics related to social networks and wellbeing (see consortium publications: https://www.netresilience.fi/en/publications/).

The current presentation will briefly introduce our ongoing work with kinship data compiled from Finnish register data, which covers the entire Finnish population. We aim to examine the influence of the existence (that is, never born, alive, or deceased) of both biological and affinal kin up to first cousins on the survival of an index individual (referred to as "ego"), using complete population register data and kin networks from Finland. The idea is to apply machine learning techniques in a data driven way to identify which relatives, and at which points in life, are most beneficial for longevity.

Keywords/Topics

Finland, kin, networks

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