Fish Consumption Across Generations – A Life Cycle Approach

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The consumption of various foods and beverages is likely to differ with age, over time, across generations, and across socioeconomic groups. Age effects reflect biological and social processes across the life cycle of an individual, period effects reflect variation over years that influence all age groups simultaneously, and generational effects reflect changes across a group of people who experienced an initial event in the same year. The effects of period and age are frequently included in models of the consumption of food and beverages, however, generational effects are usually not included in such models.

We investigate the gender-specific variation in Norwegian fish consumption across birth cohorts and over age and time. We focus on fish consumption because sufficient fish consumption is an important part of a healthy diet. Food and nutrition authorities typically recommend that adults should eat two or three servings of fish per week. We have three objectives for this study. First, we investigate the affects of age and birth cohort on the
probability of eating fish for dinner at least once per week among males and females. Second, we investigate the effects of social inequality in fish consumption by estimating the effects of income and education on the probability of eating fish for dinner at least once per week. Third, we investigate future fish consumption by simulating the changes in probability of eating fish for dinner at least once per week for different birth cohorts as they age.

We use data from the Norwegian Monitor Survey, which is a nationally representative and repeated cross-sectional survey of adults aged 15 to 95 years. This survey has been conducted biannually since 1985. We estimate logistic regression models. The estimated models are used to simulate how the probabilities of eating fish for dinner at least once a week changes as the birth cohorts age. The probabilities are simulated for four groups: females with and without college education and males with and without college education.

Several results emerge. As expected, the probabilities of eating fish for dinner at least once per week increase with age in all the four groups. Furthermore, except for the group of males without college education, the older cohorts have lower probabilities of eating fish than the younger cohorts when the cohorts are measured at the same age. This result suggests that the total number of people who will eat fish for dinner at least once per week will increase as younger cohorts slowly replace older cohorts. Finally, we find that being married increases the probability of having fish for dinner.