

## Evolutionary riddle: Why do women live longer than men?

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Women live longer than men. This simple statement holds a tantalizing riddle that Steven Austad, Ph.D., and Kathleen Fischer, Ph.D., of the University of Alabama at Birmingham explore in a perspective piece published in *Cell Metabolism* on June 14.

“Humans are the only species in which one sex is known to have a ubiquitous survival advantage,” the UAB researchers write in their research review covering a multitude of species. “Indeed, the sex difference in longevity may be one of the most robust features of human biology.”

Though other species, from roundworms and fruit flies to a spectrum of mammals, show lifespan differences that may favor one sex in certain studies, contradictory studies with different diets, mating patterns or environmental conditions often flip that advantage to the other sex. With humans, however, it appears to be all females all the time.

“We don’t know why [women](#) live longer,” said Austad. “It’s amazing that it hasn’t become a stronger focus of research in human biology.”

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