

# Did the COVID-19 pandemic increase the importance of health for life satisfaction? Evidence from France

Philippe Tessier<sup>(a)</sup> François-Charles Wolff<sup>(b)</sup>

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COVID-19 has brought health protection to the top of the political agenda in many countries. This article suggests that personal health may have become more important for life satisfaction in the era of COVID-19 due to hedonic adaptation to adverse events and social comparisons with severely infected individuals. Using repeated cross-sectional data in France between 2016 and 2021, we tested whether the correlation between life satisfaction and health satisfaction increased after the onset of the pandemic. We propose a strategy based on jittering to smooth the ordinal variables of life and health satisfaction and estimate gender-specific triple-difference regressions. Our results show an increase in the correlation between health and life satisfaction for women 50 years and older compared to younger women, while no change is observed for men. This finding is robust to several specifications and sensitivity analyses. However, the increase in the contribution of health to life satisfaction observed for older women was temporary and disappeared in the second half of 2021.

Keywords: life satisfaction, health satisfaction, COVID, France

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1. (a) SPHERE, Nantes Université, Univ Tours, INSERM, Methods in Patients-Centered Outcomes and Health Research, F-44000 Nantes. Address: IRS2 22 Boulevard Benoni Goullin, 44000 Nantes, France. Phone: +33 (0)2 53 00 91 27. E-mail: philippe.tessier@univ-nantes.fr. Corresponding author.
2. (b) LEMNA, Nantes Université and TEPP, BP52231 Chemin de la Censive du Tertre, 44322 Nantes Cedex, France. E-mail: francois.wolff@univ-nantes.fr