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Single men getting healthier

Widowers aren't as healthy as husbands

By Megha Satyanarayana Detroit Free Press

Single guys, rejoice. A new 30-year study from Michigan State University released last week suggests that never-married men are becoming as healthy as their married counterparts.

However, marriage is still meaningful, the authors said, as widowers reported themselves in poorer health than husbands. The gap widened every year.

MSU author Hui Liu, assistant professor of sociology, said the study shows that policy promoting marriage for health may be outdated, as other forms of long-term commitment become more common.

The study also suggests that widows and widowers need strong reinforcement and community support help to keep themselves mentally and physically healthy.

Liu studied more than 1 million surveys taken by people 25 to 80 years old between 1972 and 2003. Each year, more never-married men described themselves as healthy, a number starting to catch up with married men.

For widowers, the gap between their health and the health of married men widened over 30 years. Liu said she thinks there are several reasons.

"People live longer, and the marriage duration increases over time," she said. It's more stressful when that longterm companion dies.

The survey doesn't consistently distinguish between mental and physical health, so she plans on looking at whether social interactions in the widowed population improve both.



JOURNAL FILE A new study suggests that the health gap between married men and bachelors has narrowed, and that promoting marriage to men for health reasons is outdated.