

Basic Instincts? Genes and Fertility

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to understand the extent to which female fertility behavior is affected by genes rather than environment. We address this issue using data from the UK Biobank, which contains detail genetic information on 500,000 individuals. For a wide range of birth cohorts, we analyze several fertility traits from age at menarche to age at menopause and provide evidence on heritability, genetic correlations and outcome differentials by genetic endowment. Using new multivariate regression analysis, we provide evidence of the key role played by genes in all fertility processes under analysis and underline the importance of gene-environment interactions, especially in the case of age at first sex and age at first birth.