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**Social capital as an element of impact on public health: a gender gap analysis for Spain**

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The recent COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of health, not only for physical but also mental well-being. The isolation to which the population was subjected in many countries drastically reduced social interaction at that time and emphasized the relevance of social capital. The aim of this article is to study the importance of social capital in health, and its impact in gender inequalities, in order to provide guidance on social policy that contributes to the reduction of the gender health gap.

We used the Spanish data from the European Survey on Living Conditions (EU-SILC). Spain is a representative country of Southern Europe, where there are strong gender inequalities in health, especially among the elderly. The selected sample includes the population aged 25 years and over. In total, 25,054 individuals were considered, of whom 47% were men and 53% were women. Self-rated health was used as a general indicator of health status. Different sociodemographic variables and various social capital variables, such as satisfaction with social relationships or meeting with family and friends, were included in the analysis. In order to carry out this analysis, several multivariate logistic estimations were performed. In our results, social capital variables were highly significant and positively associated with perceived health. In the case of women, there is a strong positive association, especially relevant for older women (over 75) and those with lower levels of education (no education or primary education). In both cases, these are the most vulnerable women, who report a poorer health status, with a gender gap in health particularly intense in our estimations for older women. In conclusion, social policies supporting elderly women, promoting participation in group activities and facilitating relationships with others, constitute a strategy of great impact on their perception of health.

**Key messages:**

- Social capital variables were highly significant and positively associated with perceived health, especially relevant for older women and those with lower levels of education.
- Social policies supporting elderly women, promoting participation in group activities and facilitating relationships with others, constitute a strategy of great impact on their perception of health.