

# Sex and Race Disparities in Disability Life Expectancy Among the Oldest Old

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# Motivation

- Racial and sex disparities in healthy life at earlier ages documented
- What happens to these disparities among the oldest old?
- Puzzle
  - Age as leveler
  - Persistent inequality
  - Multiple jeopardy

# Motivation

- Debate among economists, biologists and demographers
- Importance of assessing changes in disparity
  - Racial inequality in health and quality of life
  - Differential demand for medical care and services
  - Long term fiscal viability of public pension programs
- Findings
  - Mild DLE: few disparities
  - Severe DLE: race and sex disparities exist and persist
  - Disability compression: only experienced by black women

# What We Know and What We Don't Know

- We know
  - Women: higher prevalence of many chronic conditions
  - Blacks: higher prevalence of many chronic conditions
  - Blacks: higher mortality at most ages
- What we don't know
  - Does the racial and sex gap in healthy life narrow, persist, or expand over age and time, particularly considering severity of ill health, among the oldest old?
  - Do some race-sex groups live not just longer lives, but longer healthier lives, while others spend additional years in illness?
- Why we don't know what we don't know
  - Substantive: mild and severe disability
  - Demographic: cohort vs. period

# Levels of Severity in Physical Disability

- Motivated by disablement process
- Most severe physical disability-inability to provide self care
- Special equipment and aides
- Two different disability processes

	Mild	Severe
Number ADL	$\leq 2$	$\geq 3$
Equip. usage	No	Yes
Meaning	Surmountable difficulty	Significant burden

# Data & Methods

- 1971-2003 Death Counts
- 1991-2003 US Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey
- Medicare Benefits
  
- Method of extinct generations
- Cohort Sullivan (Imai and Soneji, 2007)

# Disability Prevalence

## Age 82, 1909 birth cohort

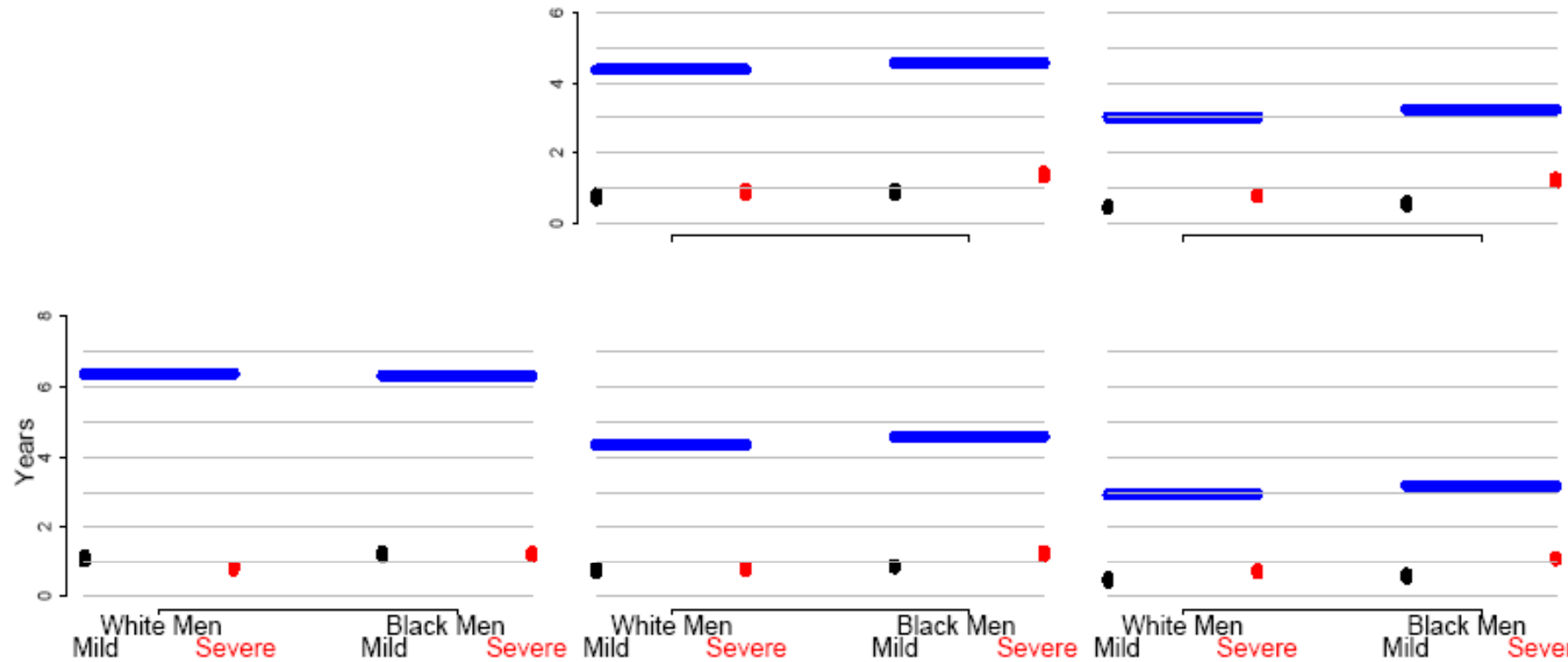
		White		Black	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
# ADL	Mild	.21	.24	.24	.28
	Severe	.09	.13	.13	.18
Equip	Mild	.15	.18	.16	.19
Usage	Severe	.14	.19	.21	.27

# Racial Disparities

Age 82

Age 88

Age 93

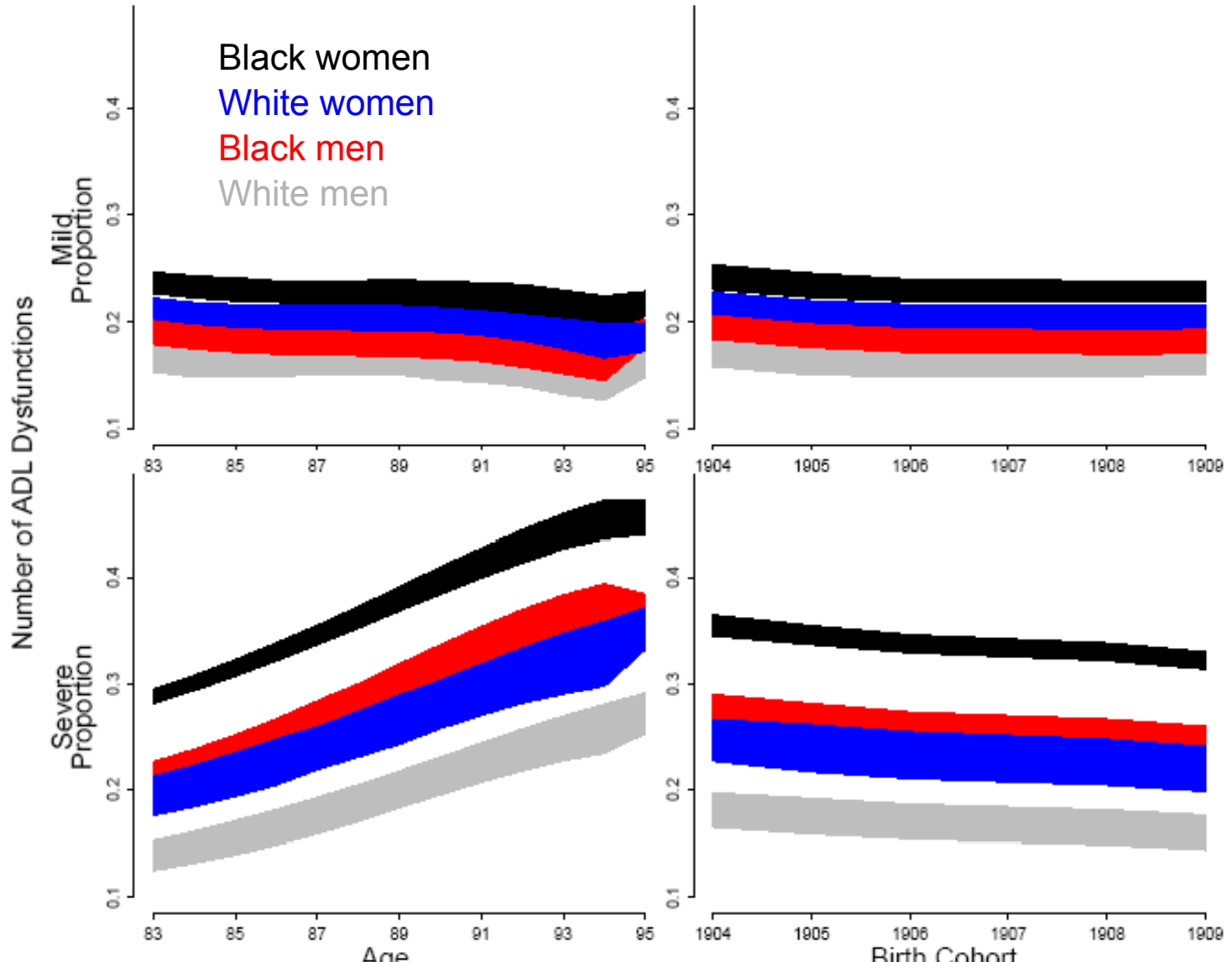




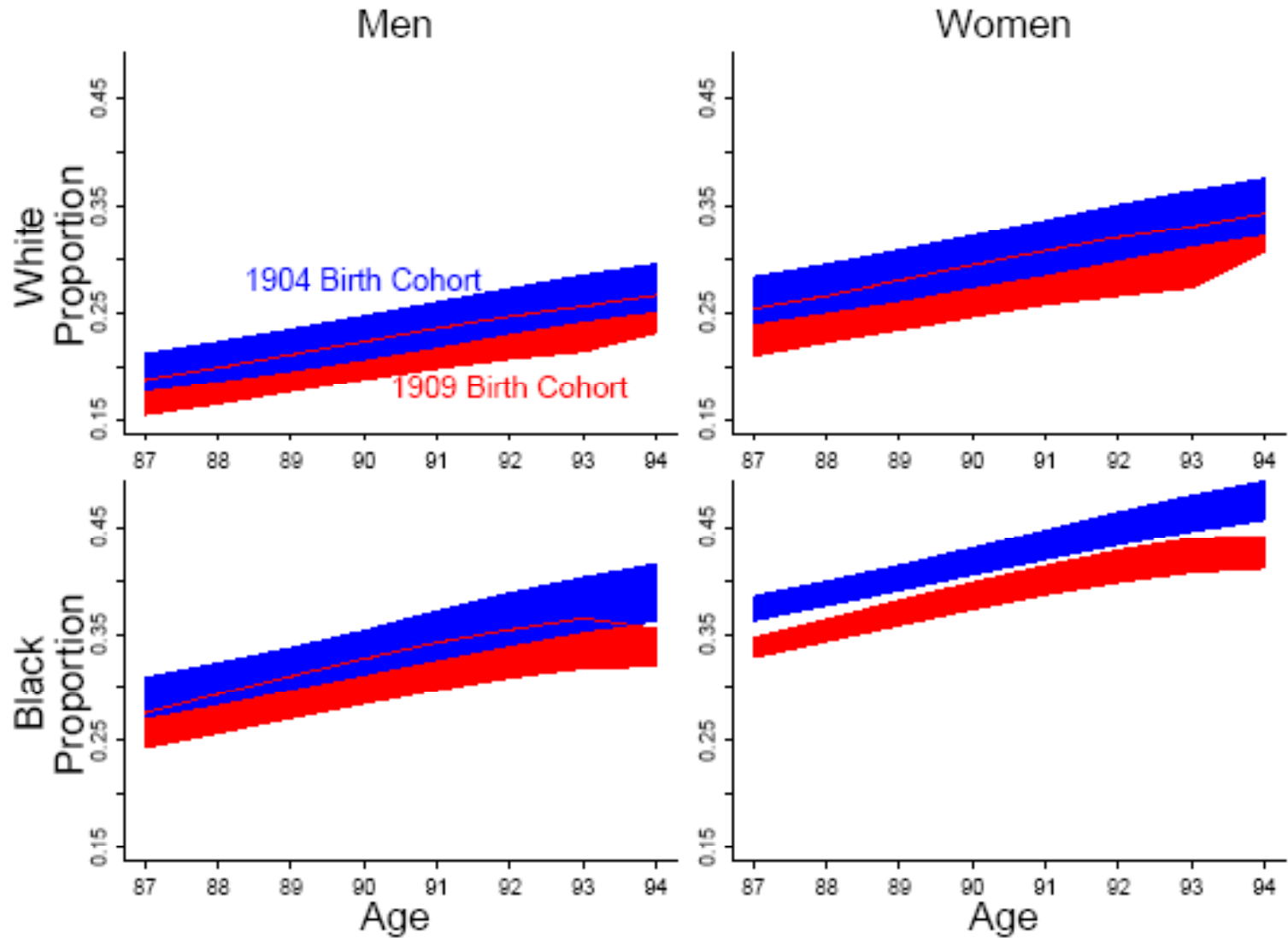
# Changes over Age and Time

1909 Birth Cohort

Age 86



# Disability Compression



# Conclusion

- Mild DLE: few disparities
- Severe DLE: race and sex disparities exist and persist over age and time
  - Evidence of persistent inequality among oldest old
  - Potential explanations?
- Disability Compression: only experienced by black women