Research Questions
1. Why do widows face a higher mortality risk than married individuals of the same age?
2. Do the same factors predict mortality among the married and the widowed?

Background
-Death of a spouse increases probability of death for the surviving spouse, relative to same aged married men or women.
-3 pathways may mediate the effect of widowhood on mortality: Social Support, Marital Status, and Health.

Data & Methods
-Data are from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS)
-Sample restricted to those who were married and became widowed between 1992 and 2014
-All models control for age & race/ethnicity

Conclusions
-Becoming widowed is harmful for health. The health and mortality of others can have important health consequences for individuals.
-Widows in this sample face a 47% higher risk of mortality than married individuals of the same age. Number of children or education do not explain much of the disadvantage.
-Contrary to expectations, the effects of gender, children, and education on mortality are not different for widows compared to married people.

Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates

Descriptive Statistics, HRS Sample

Question 1: Widows' Mortality

Question 2: Mortality Predictors

The Effect of "Death Type" and Gender

Exits from Marriage

Conclusions
-Widows in this sample face a 47% higher risk of mortality than married individuals of the same age.

Note: Missing death type was imputed using ICE.