

CFPR SEMINAR SERIES (JAN-APR 2025)

SUCCESSFUL AGING IN COSTA RICA: EVIDENCE FROM THE COSTA RICAN LONGEVITY AND HEALTHY AGING STUDY (CRELES)



24th January 2025
12PM – 1:30PM (SGT)
AS7-06-42
Seminar Room



Session chaired by:

Associate Prof. Kriti Vikram
(CFPR Deputy Director & Department of
Sociology and Anthropology)

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Costa Rica has long been recognized for achieving “good health at low cost,” a notable accomplishment for a middle-income country. Despite its economic status, Costa Rica boasts a life expectancy higher than that of many wealthier nations. Our team’s Costa Rican Longevity and Healthy Aging Study (CRELES) began fielding a comprehensive household survey in 2005, which has provided robust data to verify that, compared to other countries, mortality rates are particularly low among older adults in Costa Rica. Additionally, we found surprisingly flat socioeconomic gradients in health and mortality, suggesting that health outcomes are less tied to socioeconomic status than in many other contexts. Our research also verified the presence of a “Blue Zone” hotspot of exceptional longevity in the Nicoyan region. However, this longevity advantage has diminished in more recent cohorts and was observed primarily among males rather than females. In this talk, we will delve into evidence supporting various hypotheses about the underlying drivers of Costa Rica’s exceptional longevity, explore the role of social, cultural, and environmental factors, and discuss ideas for high-priority future research to build on these findings.

OUR SPEAKER



Professor William Dow
PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH
AND DEMOGRAPHY

William H. Dow is a Professor of Health Policy and Management at the School of Public Health and a Professor in the in the Department of Demography at Berkeley, where he has been since 2004. He is the founding associate director of the Berkeley Population Center and has served as the director of the Center on the Economics and Demography of Aging since 2013. Dow has held various leadership roles in the School, including division head and Interim Dean in 2018–19. He is also a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research and a former Senior Economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisers. His research focuses on health policy improvements and healthy ageing in vulnerable populations, analyzing California’s health insurance reforms, and developing behavioural strategies for HIV prevention and smoking cessation. He has also led studies on longevity in Costa Rica and has worked on projects in Cuba, Mexico, Tanzania, and Japan.