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Do socioeconomic mortality differences decrease with rising age?

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VOLUME 13 - ARTICLE 2

PAGES 35 - 62

Date Received: 17 Aug 2004

Date Published: 9 Aug 2005

<http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol13/2/>

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Abstract

The impact of SES on mortality is an established finding in mortality research. I examine, whether this impact decreases with age. Most research finds evidence for this decrease but it is unknown whether the decline is due to mortality selection. My data come from the US-HRS Study and includes 9376 persons aged 59+, which are followed over 8 years. The variables allow a time varying measurement of SES, health and behavior. Event-history-analysis is applied to analyze mortality differentials. My results show that socioeconomic mortality differences are stable across ages whereas they decline clearly with decreasing health. The first finding that health rather than age is the equalizer combined with the second finding of unequally distributed health leads to the conclusion that in old age, the impact of SES is transferred to health and is stable across ages.

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Keywords

[health](#), [HRS](#), [mortality](#), [old age](#), [socio-economic differentials](#), [socioeconomic status](#), [USA](#)

Word count (Main text)

7319

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