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Widening educational disparities in all-cause mortality: An analysis of Austrian data with international comparisons

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Abstract

Recent studies have demonstrated a widening in the relative mortality gap between the various socio-economic classes in several industrialised, Western countries. The present paper aims to determine whether or not education-related differentials in mortality have increased between 1981/82 and 1991/92 in Austria, and compares these findings with those gleaned from other European countries as well as the US and New Zealand. For the Austrian analysis, the data source consists of census records from 1981 and 1991 for the entire Austrian population that were linked with the respective death registry records for a follow-up period of one year. The disparities were measured by means of the regression-based Slope Index of Inequality and Relative Index of Inequality. The findings suggest that educational inequalities in mortality have widened in Austria, but more among men than among women. Austrian results are similar to patterns observed in other countries. International patterns pertaining to social disparities in mortality appeared mixed, when we distinguish between the various age groups and between men and women. However, widening educational mortality disparities are a worldwide phenomenon, a phenomenon that persists even when the educational expansion of the 1980s is taken into account.

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