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**Coverage**  
England and Wales

**Theme**  
Health and Care



## Infant mortality linked to deprivation

There is an increased risk of infant mortality with deprivation, according to a new study published today by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The article in *Health Statistics Quarterly 42* looked at infant mortality in England and Wales during 2005 and 2006 in relation to the level of deprivation of the area in which the mother lived, socio-economic status of the father, marital status, ethnicity of the baby, maternal age, birthweight, maternal country of birth, sex of the baby and gestational age.

The study, carried out by ONS and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, found that preterm birth, low birthweight and small-for-gestational-age were associated with deprivation and increased the risk of infant mortality.

The study also showed that 24 per cent of all infant deaths in England and Wales could potentially be avoided if deprivation levels were reduced to the lowest level of deprivation. This is equivalent to around 666 deaths every year.

A separate report in *Health Statistics Quarterly* (HSQ) shows gestation-specific infant mortality by social and biological factors among babies born in England and Wales in 2006.

The findings indicated that 8 per cent of live births were preterm (born under 37 weeks gestation), 88 per cent were born at term (37-41 weeks) and 4 per cent were born post term (42 weeks and above). The corresponding infant mortality rates were 41.0, 1.9, and 1.5 deaths per 1,000 live births respectively.

The report also showed that among babies born at 37 weeks and over, infant mortality in the routine and manual group (2.1 deaths per 1,000 live births) was almost twice that of infant mortality in the managerial and professional group (1.1 deaths per 1,000 live births), based on the occupation of the baby's father.

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It also showed that infant mortality rates in both the Pakistani and Caribbean groups were over twice the infant mortality rate of the White British group (9.8 deaths per 1,000 live births compared with 4.4 deaths per 1,000 live births).

### **Inequality in female mortality**

A separate article in *HSQ 42* looked at mortality among women of working age (25-59) in 2001-03 in England and Wales. It showed that mortality for women in routine occupations was around twice as high as that of women in higher managerial and professional occupations.

Two methods of classification were used in the article. Firstly, the study estimated that the age-standardised mortality rate for women in routine occupations was 220 deaths per 100,000 population, 1.9 times the rate of 116 per 100,000 for women in higher managerial and professional occupations.

The study also looked at the difference in mortality where, for married women, the husband's occupation was also taken into account. Using this measure, the age-standardised mortality rate for women in the least advantaged class was 302 per 100,000 population, 2.6 times the rate of 118 per 100,000 for women in the most advantaged class.

Inequalities in male mortality by socio-economic classification were published in an earlier edition of *HSQ*. This article indicated that the mortality rate for working age men in the routine class was 2.6 times that of men in the higher managerial and professional class (513 per 100,000 compared with 194 per 100,000).

The above articles and report are available in *Health Statistics Quarterly* 42 Summer 2009 on the ONS website at:

[www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=6725](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=6725)

Social inequalities in adult male mortality by the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, England and Wales, 2001-03 is available in *Health Statistics Quarterly* 36.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

### 1. National Statistics Socio-economic Classification – analytic classes

#### Box one

#### National Statistics Socio-economic Classification – analytic classes

Analytic class	Examples of occupations included
1 Higher managerial and professional occupations	Directors and chief executives of major organisations, civil engineers, medical practitioners, IT strategy and planning professionals, legal professionals, architects, senior officials in national and local government
2 Lower managerial and professional occupations	Teachers in primary and secondary schools, quantity surveyors, public service administrative professionals, social workers, nurses, IT technicians
3 Intermediate occupations	Graphic designers, medical and dental technicians, Civil Service administrative officers and local government clerical officers, counter clerks, school and company secretaries
4 Small employers and own account workers	Hairdressing and beauty salon proprietors, shopkeepers, dispensing opticians in private practice, farmers, self-employed decorators
5 Lower supervisory and technical occupations	Bakers and flour confectioners, catering supervisors, head waitresses, postal supervisors, sales assistants supervising others
6 Semi-routine occupations	Retail assistants, catering assistants, clothing cutters, dressmakers, traffic wardens, veterinary nurses and assistants, shelf fillers
7 Routine occupations	Hairdressing employees, floral arrangers, sewing machinists, bar staff, cleaners and domestics
Other	Full-time students, never worked, long-term unemployed, inadequately described, not classifiable for other reasons

Source: NS-SEC User Manual, Office for National Statistics

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