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**Coverage**  
England and Wales  
**Theme**  
Health and Care

## Variations persist in life expectancy by social class

### 2002-2005 data released

The variations in life expectancy among social classes which have been found in previous studies persist, according to new figures issued today by the Office for National Statistics. The new data, derived from the ONS Longitudinal Study, cover the period 2002-05 for the first time.

While life expectancy has risen for all social classes over the last 30 years, people in professional occupations (Social Class I) have the longest expectation of life, followed by managerial and technical occupations (Social Class II), and so on. People in unskilled manual occupations (Social Class V) have the shortest expectation of life.

In the period 2002-05:

- Males in the professional class had a life expectancy at birth of 80.0, compared with 72.7 years for those in the manual unskilled class
- Females in the professional class had a life expectancy at birth of 85.1 years compared with 78.1 years for the unskilled manual class.
- Unskilled men (Social Class V) aged 65 could expect to live a further 14.1 years, fractionally above the expectation of life professional men would have had in 1972-76 (14.0 years)
- Unskilled women aged 65 had an expectation of life of 17.7 years, less than professional women in 1972-76 (19.1 years).

Taking the period of analysis as a whole, from 1972-76 to 2002-05:

- Both males and females classified to non-manual occupations had a greater increase in life expectancy at birth and at age 65 than those classified to manual occupations
- For men, there was an increase in life expectancy at birth of 8.0 years for those classified to non-manual occupations compared with 6.8 years for those classified as manual
- For women, these figures were 5.2 years and 4.8 years respectively

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By contrast, between 1997-2001 and 2002-05:

- Life expectancy for males at birth and at age 65 increased more for manual than non-manual groups
- For women, estimates of life expectancy increased by a similar amount for those classified to non-manual and manual occupations.

Care should be taken in interpreting the figures. Some degree of variation is to be expected as a result of sampling and the results for the latest period, while interesting, are not conclusive evidence of an underlying change in the pattern of inequalities.





**Table 1 Life expectancy at birth and at age 65 by social class, men, England and Wales 1972-2005**

Social class	Years													
	1972-76		1977-81		1982-86		1987-91		1992-96		1997-2001		2002-2005	
	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI
<b>At birth</b>														
I	71.9	1.2	74.4	1.2	75.1	1.1	76.2	1.0	78.0	0.9	79.5	0.9	80.0	1.0
II	71.9	0.6	72.6	0.6	74.1	0.5	75.0	0.5	76.1	0.5	77.9	0.5	79.4	0.5
IIIN	69.5	0.8	71.1	0.7	72.5	0.7	74.4	0.7	75.3	0.7	77.0	0.7	78.4	0.7
IIIM	70.0	0.4	70.0	0.4	71.7	0.4	72.7	0.4	73.8	0.4	74.8	0.4	76.5	0.4
IV	68.3	0.7	69.0	0.6	71.0	0.6	70.8	0.6	72.9	0.6	73.5	0.6	75.7	0.6
V	66.5	1.1	67.4	1.1	67.7	1.0	68.7	1.0	68.6	1.0	71.5	0.9	72.7	1.1
Unclassified	57.5	1.9	62.7	1.6	65.5	1.5	66.7	1.3	68.8	1.2	71.5	1.1	73.8	1.1
All men	69.3	0.3	70.1	0.3	71.7	0.2	72.6	0.2	73.9	0.2	75.3	0.2	77.0	0.2
Non-manual	71.2	0.4	72.3	0.4	73.7	0.4	75.0	0.4	76.1	0.4	77.9	0.4	79.2	0.4
Manual	69.1	0.3	69.4	0.3	71.0	0.3	71.7	0.3	73.0	0.3	74.1	0.3	75.9	0.3
<i>Difference</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>2.7</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>3.2</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<b>At age 65</b>														
I	14.0	0.9	15.5	0.9	15.5	0.8	15.8	0.7	17.0	0.7	18.3	0.6	18.3	0.6
II	13.3	0.4	14.2	0.3	14.5	0.3	15.0	0.3	15.7	0.3	17.1	0.3	18.0	0.3
IIIN	12.6	0.4	13.3	0.4	13.6	0.4	14.3	0.4	15.4	0.4	16.7	0.4	17.4	0.5
IIIM	12.2	0.2	12.5	0.2	13.1	0.2	13.6	0.2	14.3	0.2	15.2	0.2	16.3	0.3
IV	12.2	0.3	12.1	0.3	12.7	0.3	12.8	0.3	13.9	0.3	14.1	0.3	15.7	0.4
V	11.6	0.4	11.8	0.4	11.6	0.4	12.0	0.5	12.6	0.5	13.2	0.5	14.1	0.7
Unclassified	10.8	0.4	9.8	0.5	10.9	0.6	11.1	0.7	12.0	0.7	13.7	0.7	15.1	0.8
All men	12.3	0.1	12.6	0.1	13.1	0.1	13.7	0.1	14.5	0.1	15.5	0.1	16.6	0.2
Non-manual	13.1	0.3	14.0	0.3	14.3	0.2	14.9	0.2	15.8	0.2	17.1	0.2	17.9	0.3
Manual	12.1	0.2	12.3	0.2	12.7	0.2	13.2	0.2	14.0	0.2	14.7	0.2	15.9	0.2
<i>Difference</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.6</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.3</i>

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

CI Confidence interval

**Table 2 Change in life expectancy at birth and at age 65 by social class, men, England and Wales**

Social class	Years		
	Change between 1972-76 and 2002-05	Change between 1992-96 and 2002-05	Change between 1997-2001 and 2002-05
<b>at birth</b>			
I	8.1	2.0	0.5
II	7.4	3.3	1.4
IIIN	8.9	3.1	1.4
IIIM	6.5	2.7	1.7
IV	7.4	2.8	2.2
V	6.2	4.1	1.2
Unclassified	16.3	5.0	2.3
All men	7.7	3.1	1.7
Non-manual	8.0	3.1	1.3
Manual	6.8	3.0	1.8
<b>at age 65</b>			
I	4.3	1.3	0.0
II	4.7	2.3	0.9
IIIN	4.9	2.1	0.8
IIIM	4.1	2.0	1.1
IV	3.5	1.8	1.6
V	2.5	1.5	0.8
Unclassified	4.3	3.1	1.4
All men	4.4	2.1	1.1
Non-manual	4.8	2.1	0.8
Manual	3.8	1.9	1.2

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

**Table 3 Life expectancy at birth and at age 65 by social class, women, England and Wales 1972-2005**

Social Class	Years													
	1972-76		1977-81		1982-86		1987-91		1992-96		1997-2001		2002-2005	
	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI	Life exp.	95% CI
<b>At birth</b>														
I	79.0	1.9	80.1	1.7	80.7	1.3	81.1	1.1	83.8	1.1	82.6	1.0	85.1	1.1
II	77.1	0.6	78.3	0.6	78.8	0.5	80.7	0.5	81.4	0.5	81.8	0.5	83.2	0.5
IIIN	78.3	0.7	78.2	0.7	79.0	0.6	80.0	0.5	80.7	0.5	81.6	0.5	82.4	0.5
IIIM	75.2	0.6	76.3	0.5	77.3	0.5	77.9	0.5	79.2	0.4	79.4	0.4	80.5	0.5
IV	75.3	0.7	75.9	0.6	77.5	0.6	77.4	0.5	78.2	0.5	78.8	0.5	79.9	0.6
V	74.2	1.2	75.6	1.0	75.9	0.9	76.6	0.9	77.5	0.9	77.9	0.9	78.1	1.2
Unclassified	70.1	1.7	73.0	1.2	73.0	1.3	74.0	1.1	75.0	1.1	77.5	0.8	77.9	0.9
All women	75.3	0.3	76.5	0.2	77.4	0.2	78.3	0.2	79.3	0.2	80.0	0.2	81.1	0.2
Non-manual	77.7	0.4	78.4	0.4	79.0	0.4	80.4	0.3	81.3	0.3	81.8	0.3	82.9	0.3
Manual	75.2	0.4	76.0	0.4	77.2	0.3	77.5	0.3	78.5	0.3	79.0	0.3	80.0	0.3
<i>Difference</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<b>At age 65</b>														
I	19.1	1.7	20.0	1.5	18.9	1.1	19.0	0.8	21.1	0.9	20.7	0.8	22.0	0.9
II	17.2	0.4	17.8	0.4	18.2	0.4	19.2	0.3	19.7	0.3	20.1	0.3	21.0	0.3
IIIN	17.9	0.6	17.7	0.4	18.2	0.4	18.7	0.3	19.2	0.3	19.8	0.3	19.9	0.3
IIIM	16.4	0.5	16.9	0.4	16.9	0.3	17.2	0.3	18.1	0.3	18.2	0.3	18.7	0.4
IV	16.9	0.4	16.8	0.3	17.5	0.3	17.3	0.3	17.4	0.3	17.9	0.3	18.9	0.3
V	16.6	0.7	16.4	0.6	16.2	0.5	16.4	0.5	16.6	0.5	16.9	0.5	17.7	0.6
Unclassified	15.5	0.2	15.8	0.3	15.6	0.3	15.8	0.4	16.0	0.4	17.1	0.5	17.6	0.5
All women	16.3	0.1	16.7	0.1	17.0	0.1	17.5	0.1	18.1	0.1	18.6	0.1	19.4	0.2
Non-manual	17.5	0.3	17.9	0.3	18.2	0.2	18.9	0.2	19.5	0.2	20.0	0.2	20.5	0.2
Manual	16.6	0.3	16.8	0.2	17.0	0.2	17.1	0.2	17.6	0.2	17.9	0.2	18.6	0.2
<i>Difference</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.9</i>	<i>0.3</i>

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

CI Confidence interval

**Table 4 Change in life expectancy at birth and at age 65 by social class, women, England and Wales**

Social class	Years		
	Change between 1972-76 and 2002-05	Change between 1992-96 and 2002-05	Change between 1997-2001 and 2002-05
<b>at birth</b>			
I	6.1	1.3	2.5
II	6.1	1.9	1.4
IIIN	4.1	1.6	0.8
IIIM	5.3	1.4	1.1
IV	4.5	1.7	1.0
V	3.9	0.6	0.1
Unclassified	7.8	2.9	0.4
All women	5.8	1.8	1.1
Non-manual	5.2	1.6	1.1
Manual	4.8	1.5	1.1
<b>at age 65</b>			
I	2.9	0.8	1.2
II	3.8	1.3	1.0
IIIN	2.1	0.7	0.2
IIIM	2.4	0.6	0.5
IV	2.0	1.5	1.0
V	1.1	1.1	0.9
Unclassified	2.1	1.7	0.5
All women	3.1	1.3	0.7
Non-manual	3.0	1.0	0.6
Manual	2.0	1.1	0.8

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study