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Coverage

England and Wales

Theme

Health and Care

Death rate highest in men employed in routine jobs

In 2001-03, men aged 25-64 working in routine occupations (for example, bus drivers, refuse collectors) had a death rate 2.8 times higher than that of men working as large employers or higher managers, according to new statistics on mortality by socio-economic characteristics released today by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Death rates fell between 1991-93 and 2001-03 among all socio-economic groups. Consequently, the gap in mortality between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged men persists.

These are the first official figures on adult mortality among men using the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). It forms part of an innovative new programme of work ONS is undertaking on social inequalities in mortality, which will draw on a range of data sources to analyse causes of death, life expectancy and time trends by NS-SEC for males and females.

The NS-SEC was introduced in 2001 to reflect the changing nature of employment in the UK and to describe socio-economic differences. These results show the presence of a clear mortality divide between men working in occupations with low levels of autonomy, career prospects and job security and men in other occupations.

Some more key findings include:

- Although the risk of death for all men increases with age, the relative difference between socio-economic groups decreases. Men in routine occupations were 5.1 times more likely to die than those in higher professional occupations (for example medical doctors, lawyers, architects) at age 25-29, falling to 2.3 times more likely at ages 60-64.

Issued by
National Statistics
1 Drummond Gate
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone
Press Office 020 7533 5702
Email press.office@ons.gsi.gov.uk
Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034

Statistician
Chris White 01633 455865
Email chris.white@ons.gov.uk

Internet
www.statistics.gov.uk

- Men in occupations regulated by a labour contract have a higher mortality rate than men in England and Wales as a whole.
- Small employers, own account workers (self-employed builders, shopkeepers) have a death rate at ages 25-29 similar to semi-routine workers (postmen, security guards) and clearly higher than those occupational groups containing large employers, managers and professionals.
- At ages 40-44, there is a sharp increase in the death rate among men in the semi-routine occupations compared with the lower supervisory and technical occupations (train drivers, plumbers)

This report can be found in *Health Statistics Quarterly 36*

(<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=6725&Pos=&ColRank=1&Rank=422>).

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The NS-SEC classes are defined by occupational characteristics such as job control, career prospects and security of employment, rather than income or broader concepts of social position. However, the results by NS-SEC have a strong affinity with results using other socio-economic classifications and material disadvantage found historically. These figures show little change in health inequalities since 1991-93, when working age men in unskilled manual jobs had 2.9 times the risk of death of those in professional occupations.
2. The NS-SEC classes used with some examples of the occupations they contain are as follows:

NS-SEC analytic class		Examples of occupations included
1.1	Large employers, higher managers	directors and chief executives of major organisations
1.2	Higher professionals	civil engineers, medical practitioners, lawyers, architects
2	Lower managerial, professional	teachers, quantity surveyors, nurses, social workers
3	Intermediate	graphic designers, counter clerks, secretaries
4	Small employers, own acc. wrkrs	hairdressing salon proprietors, shopkeepers, farmers, dispensing opticians in private practice
5	Lower supervisory technical	bakers, screen-printers, plumbers, electricians and motor mechanics employed by others, gardeners
6	Semi-routine	Pest control officers, clothing cutters, traffic wardens, farm workers, veterinary nurses, shelf fillers
7	Routine	sewing machinists, bus and coach drivers, labourers, bar staff, cleaners, car park attendants



3. Mortality rates, except those for specific ages, are directly age-standardised mortality rates per 100,000 men aged 25-64 using the European Standard Population. Age-standardisation allows comparison between populations with different age structures.
4. The methods used to produce these figures are described in White C, Glickman M, Johnson B, Corbin T (2007) 'Social inequalities in adult male mortality by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification, England and Wales, 2001-03' Health Statistics Quarterly 36, 9-23.
5. Figures for 1991-93 are based on analysis by Registrar General's Social Class, not NS-SEC, and can be found in Drever F, Whitehead M (1997) Health Inequalities Decennial Supplement, Series DS No. 15, The Stationery Office: London.
6. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
7. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2007.