

Call for Papers for a Special Collection at *Demographic Research*

Title: Socio-Economic Inequalities in Mortality in the Long-Run

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Call details:

Socio-economic conditions profoundly influence both age and cause of death. In contemporary populations, inequalities in mortality by income, occupation, and education are widely observed, in which individuals with higher socio-economic status live longer, healthier lives than individuals with lower socio-economic status. This so-called socio-economic gradient in mortality is often assumed to be a constant feature of societies. However, preliminary evidence challenges this assumption, and suggests that strong socio-economic gradients in mortality may be a relatively recent development, becoming more pronounced during the twentieth century (Bengtsson et al., 2020; Mackenbach, 1992; Thompson & van Ophem, 2023). Aside from these initial studies, when, where, and why socio-economic gradients in mortality emerged, as well as how they have evolved, remain open questions.

To answer these questions, examining socio-economic gradients in cause-specific mortality is key. Cause-specific mortality data enable us to uncover the mechanisms underlying the shift from high to low mortality, and from deaths dominated by infectious diseases to deaths largely driven by lifestyle-related diseases (Smith et al., 2025). Using such data can help us to understand health and mortality transitions more broadly, and to understand how they relate to socio-economic status more specifically (Barbi et al., 2018; Murkens et al., 2023; Riswick et al., 2022). Studying gradients in cause-specific mortality may also uncover important shifts that all-cause mortality rates conceal.

Recent efforts have increased attention to the importance of cause-specific mortality for understanding the socio-economic gradient in mortality. For example, Clouston et al. (2016) proposed a framework identifying four key mortality phases that help to illustrate when and why socio-economic gradients should be expected to arise in relation to specific causes of death. Additionally, advances in record linkage and coding historical causes of death now allow researchers to test socio-economic gradients in cause-specific mortality across diverse contexts and time periods (Janssens, 2021).

Still, research on the topic remains limited and siloed. We currently lack a clear understanding of how socio-economic gradients in mortality developed over the long run,

how they differed across causes of death, and why gradients appear in some contexts but not others.

This Special Collection aims to address these gaps, by bringing together research investigating long-run changes in socio-economic inequalities in mortality, with a particular focus on cause-specific mortality. We welcome papers that:

- Examine how socio-economic gradients in mortality have changed across time, particularly across time periods with changing epidemiological environments;
- Investigate variation in mortality gradients by causes of death;
- Compare socio-economic mortality patterns across countries or regions;
- Explore mechanisms driving changes in socio-economic gradients;
- Apply or test theoretical frameworks on socio-economic inequalities in health and/or mortality.

Papers may examine a wide range of geographic areas, study historical and/or contemporary populations, and use diverse methodological approaches. We also encourage studies using various data sources, including (but not limited to) linked administrative records, survey data, and/or qualitative materials.

Ultimately, we hope that the collected papers will shed light on the mechanisms underpinning changes in socio-economic gradients, and the extent to which socio-economic gradients differ across contexts and diseases.

Submissions can be made starting from **28 January 2026** via *Demographic Research*'s online submission form as a part of the Special Collection on 'Socio-Economic Inequalities in Mortality in the Long-Run'. We ask prospective contributors to closely follow the journal's guidelines. The submission deadline is **28 June 2026**.

References

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