

Mortality at Late Age for Major U.S. Race-Ethnic Groups

Ward Kingkade
Population Projections Branch
Bureau of the Census

Ethnic differences in mortality at late age have attracted considerable discussion, most notably in terms of the Black/White crossover in age-specific death rates as well as the significantly lower death rates among the Hispanic population relative to others. The proposed paper presents an analysis of US mortality data in race-ethnic detail, by sex and single-year age, from age 60 to 100+, relying on a time series of mortality rates from 1984 to 1989 for three major race-ethnic categories (Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, and Non-Black Non-Hispanic). The dynamics of mortality rates by sex and single-year age for these categories are examined to discern whether there has been convergence or divergence in the mortality schedules at ages 60 and older. The impact of alternative graduations, including those suggested by Thatcher and associates (1998) are investigated with special attention to how they impinge on the questions mentioned above.

The National Center for Health Statistics began to disseminate data on mortality by Hispanic origin in 1984, and it was not until 1997 that all 50 states were registering deaths by Hispanic origin. This raises the question of whether the length of a state's experience in employing the Hispanic/Non-Hispanic distinction impinges on the mortality patterns for the three race-ethnic categories indicated above. To investigate this question, a comparison of mortality patterns in those states which were registering mortality by Hispanic origin as of 1984 to states which came aboard at later dates is offered..