

Recent Adult Mortality Trends in Canada, the United States and Other Low Mortality Countries

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Abstract

This paper examines recent changes in the age-at-death distribution at older ages in Canada, the U.S. and eight additional low-mortality countries. Data starting in 1950 are taken from the Human Mortality Database and a flexible two-dimensional smoothing approach based on P-splines is used to monitor these changes. The U.S. displayed the most worrying picture for the latest two decades. Indeed, for several consecutive years in that timeframe, US females and males have both recorded important declines in their modal age at death and their level of old-age mortality remains high compared to the other countries. Thus, although Canada and the US are neighboring countries, the findings for the former regarding recent old-age mortality trends rather resemble those obtained for the remaining eight low mortality countries studied. Further analysis of changes in the age-at-death distribution at older ages by socioeconomic group or by region could improve our current understanding of the latest mortality dynamics recorded among US adults.