

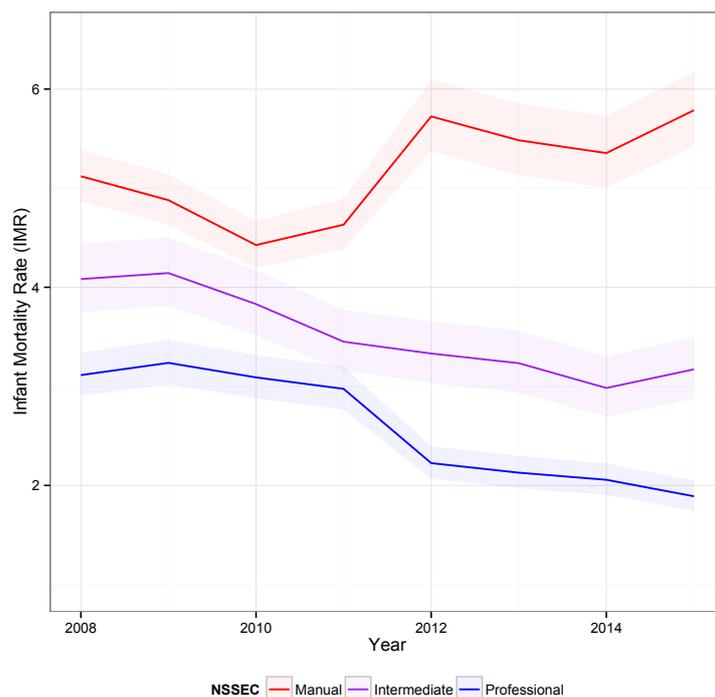
Death rate now rising in UK's poorest infants

Dear Dr Godlee,

The recent report by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health highlights the stark gap in health between rich and poor children in the UK. (1) They note that improvements made in recent years have slowed. The data on infant mortality (IMR) released by the ONS this week suggests that these improvements are reversing.(2)

In 2015 infant mortality increased for the first time in a decade. (2) But what is more concerning is that the rate has been increasing for the poorest children since 2010, whilst continuing to decline for more advantaged groups, widening inequalities (see Figure 1). Infant mortality is a sensitive indicator of the prevailing socioeconomic conditions affecting children. In recent years child poverty has risen and services that support children have been cut. (3) It should be of great concern to health professionals and policy makers that these changes may now be leading to increased infant mortality amongst the most disadvantaged families.

Figure 1. Infant mortality rate (95% confidence interval) by socio-economic classification 2008-2015.



Data source: ONS. For the purposes of the analysis we have grouped IMR for joint registrations by NS-SEC groups into professional (1, 1.1, 1.2, 2), intermediate (3,4) and manual groups (5 and below, including unclassified). In 2011, NS-SEC was rebased on the new Standard Occupational Classification (SOC2010). Up until the 2011 data year, ONS published child mortality and birth statistics by NS-SEC using the father's NS-SEC, but from 2012 onwards this was based on combined parents NS-SEC. (2)

References

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