

Mortality disparities by education widened in the U.S. in 2020

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In 2020, there was an increase in mortality disparities by educational

attainment in the United States, according to a study published online Oct. 13 in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

Emily C. Marlow, Ph.D., from the American Cancer Society in Atlanta, and colleagues examined mortality disparities by socioeconomic status, including education, overall and for seven major causes of death using data on 7,123,254 U.S. deaths from 2017 to 2020.

The researchers found that for adults with the least versus the most education, all-cause death rates were about twofold higher. From 2017 to 2019, there was an increase in disparities in all-cause mortality by [educational attainment](#) (rate ratio, 1.97 to 2.04; rate difference, 739.9 to 761.3), followed by a large increase in 2020 (rate ratio, 2.32; rate difference, 1,042.9), which persisted when excluding COVID-19 deaths (rate ratio, 2.27; rate difference, 912.3). Patterns were similar for race/ethnicity and sex. From 2017 to 2019, disparities in cause-specific mortality by education were generally stable, followed by a considerable increase in mortality disparities for [heart disease](#), cancer, [cerebrovascular disease](#), and unintentional injury from 2019 to 2020. The relative increase in rate ratio from 2019 to 2020 was greatest for unintentional injury among these causes of death (24.8 percent).

"Further research is warranted to fully understand the contributing factors to the widening disparities and to plan mitigation strategies in anticipation of future health care crises," the authors write.

One author disclosed ties to the [pharmaceutical industry](#).

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