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**MAJOR NEW STUDY OF MORTALITY ACROSS UK COUNTRIES AND CITIES
HIGHLIGHTS WORSENING MORTALITY AMONG UK'S POOREST COMMUNITIES**

New research, led by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) and published today in BMJ Open, highlights important and concerning changes in mortality rates across all countries and cities of the UK.

Importantly, these analyses pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic, and so provide crucial context for understanding the scale of pandemic-related mortality and inequalities. The findings point to the public health emergency and inequalities crisis the UK was already faced with before the pandemic and the growing urgency of the issue if we are to reverse these trends.

The research analysed almost 40 years of mortality trends up to 2017 across all parts of the UK: Scotland, England & Wales, Northern Ireland, and 11 key cities. Analyses were undertaken by sex, for different age groups, multiple causes of death, and comparing levels of deprivation.

The key findings are:

1. The 'stalling' of improvement in mortality (and related measures like life expectancy) that have been previously shown for Scotland and England since the early 2010s have been observed *in all parts* of the UK, suggesting common root cause.
2. This overall 'stalling' of improvement actually masks *increasing death rates* among the poorest communities across the UK. Comparing populations within countries and cities in terms of levels of neighbourhood deprivation, the study shows *previously improving* mortality rates among the most deprived fifth of the population have reversed: death rates have been rising since the early 2010s in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland, and within the cities analysed.

3. As a consequence, health (mortality) inequalities have widened dramatically across all parts of the UK.
4. These widening of inequalities, driven by the recent changes, have been seen for a very broad set of different causes of death, both chronic conditions like respiratory and cardiovascular disease, and other causes such as alcohol and drug-related factors.
5. The changes have been seen for men and women alike, and different age groups.

Reflecting on the findings, lead author of the research and Public Health Programme Manager at the GCPH, Dr David Walsh said, *“These changes are unprecedented and should not be happening in a wealthy society such as the UK. The analyses have to be looked at in the context of all the other recent research – both within the UK and internationally – which has shown these changes to be driven by UK Government ‘austerity’ measures in place since 2010 which have disproportionately impacted our poorest citizens.*

“In the recent words of the United Nations, in wealthy societies such as the UK, ‘poverty is a political choice’ and we are now witnessing the tragic consequences of political choices made by the UK Government since 2010. It’s simply not right that in the 21st Century people should be dying in increasing numbers in our less advantaged communities across the whole of the UK.

“We therefore call on the UK Government to reverse previous spending cuts including, in particular, those to the social security system. They need to replace the social safety net that is a mark of civilised societies worldwide, and in doing so, protect the health of our most vulnerable citizens.

“In addition, devolved governments have a role in using all existing powers to mitigate the effects of these UK Government policies, and thereby improve the lives of all in society, particularly the most vulnerable. Some positive examples of such policies in Scotland include the mitigation of the ‘Bedroom Tax’ through additional housing payments, and the new Scottish Child Payment – but more is needed across the whole of the UK”.

Notes:

1. The full results are published in the *BMJ Open* journal paper [‘Changing mortality trends in countries and cities of the UK: a population-based trend analysis’](#)
2. [Download a research summary of the findings](#)
3. [Watch a short presentation of the findings by Dr David Walsh](#)
4. The [GCPH](#) is a partnership between NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow City Council and the University of Glasgow funded by the Scottish Government.

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