

Life expectancy success story

August 26 2011

Life expectancy is increasing all the time due to better quality of life and better health care. Despite this, increases in life expectancy can be patchy, with some sources reporting that the gap in life expectancy between rich and poor is getting bigger as time goes on. However, BioMed Central's open access journal *International Journal for Equity in Health* is pleased to report that the life expectancy for people living in deprived areas in Campinas, Brazil, is catching up, rising at three times the rate of people living in more affluent areas.

Researchers from the State University of Campinas, São Paulo found that in 2000 the difference in [life expectancy](#) for people from [deprived areas](#) was 6.5 years less than those from the most affluent areas, but by 2005 this had reduced to 4.2 years. This difference was most noticeable for men from deprived areas whose life expectancy improved by over twice that of women from the same area (4.7 years compared to 2.2 years).

Prof Barros, who led this research, said that, "Our results clearly show a decline in the social inequalities in life expectancy which corresponds to a threefold overall rate of increase in life expectancy between deprived and affluent areas. During these five years of our study there has been an expansion in available health care and a decrease in violent deaths, both of which have more impact in the more deprived areas, and together may explain the improvements we found."

While some more developed countries are finding widening gaps in life expectancy, this example from Brazil may point the way towards parity

in life expectancy between the sexes, and between the poor and disadvantaged, and the rich and comfortable.

More information: Reduction of social inequalities in life expectancy in a city of Southeastern Brazil, Ana Paula Belon and Marilisa B.A. Barros, *International Journal for Equity in Health* (in press)

Provided by BioMed Central

Citation: Life expectancy success story (2011, August 26) retrieved 20 November 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-08-life-success-story.html>

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