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Dissecting the compression of mortality in Switzerland, 1876-2005

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine changes in common longevity and variability of the adult life span, and attempts to answer whether or not the compression of mortality continues in Switzerland in the years 1876-2005. The results show that the negative relationships between the large increase in the adult modal age at death, observed at least from the 1920s, and the decrease in the standard deviation of the ages at deaths occurring above it, illustrate a significant compression of adult mortality. Typical adult longevity increased by about 10% during the last fifty years in Switzerland, and adult heterogeneity in the age at death decreased in the same proportion. This analysis has not found any evidence suggesting that we are approaching longevity limits in term of modal or even maximum life spans. It ascertains a slowdown in the reduction of adult heterogeneity in longevity, already observed in Japan and other low mortality countries.

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