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Mortality inequality continues into old age
Gaps in mortality between ethnic groups in New Zealand continue into old age.

This was the finding in a study by Dr Santosh Jatrana and Professor Tony Blakely of the University of Otago, Wellington, and published in the October issue of the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.

The mortality rate of Maori males aged 65-74 years was 59% higher than that of their European counterparts. Maori females at 65-74 years of age had a 164% higher mortality rate than European females.

The rate for Pacific peoples was 41% higher.

“Ethnicity was important and the mortality level of most groups was influenced by socio-economic factors. These appear to account for about 40% of the excess disparity in mortality,” Dr Jatrana said.

Asian people had a low mortality rate compared to other ethnicities at all age groups despite an increase in population numbers over the past decade.

“The study confirms that at older ages Maori and Pacific people had exaggerated old age mortality. This has previously also been shown for the working age population,” Dr Jatrana said.

“Reducing socio-economic gaps between Maori and Pacific groups and others in the community may have an impact on reducing mortality differences.”

The findings are based on the New Zealand Census-Mortality Study, previously funded by the Health Research Council of NZ and now funded by the NZ Ministry of Health.

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