

Infant mortality is higher for low-skilled parents

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Infants of women with a short-term education are more likely to die within the first year of life. In more than half of cases, the cause of death is premature childbirth and low foetal weight. This is shown by research

from Aarhus University and Aarhus University Hospital.

In Denmark, four out of 1,000 newborn babies die before reaching their first birthday. Now, a new research project shows that women with short-term (primary and lower secondary education less than nine years) or no education have an increased risk of their child dying during the first year. Premature birth and low foetal weight can explain 55-60 per cent of cases.

Yongfu Yu and Jiong Li from Aarhus University and Aarhus University Hospital are behind the study.

"Despite the fall in [child mortality](#) in [recent decades](#), there still remains a socio-economic imbalance in the [infant mortality rate](#). Something needs to be done about that," Jiong Li says.

The results have just been published in *PLoS Medicine*. They are based on a national population study of 1.99 million children born in Denmark in the years 1981-2015.

"To reduce the risk of premature childbirth and low foetal weight will be helpful. One way among others of doing this is by increased focus on improving the health of socially and financially disadvantaged women before and during pregnancy," says Yongfu Yu.

He hopes that the results can contribute to the prevention of premature deaths in infants.

"Even in a welfare society like Denmark, [pregnant women](#) with short-term education need more resources to address social challenges in order to improve the health of infants in general and reduce child mortality in particular," says Yongfu Yu.

More information: Yongfu Yu et al. Mediating roles of preterm birth and restricted fetal growth in the relationship between maternal education and infant mortality: A Danish population-based cohort study, *PLOS Medicine* (2019). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1002831](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002831)

Provided by Aarhus University

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