

UK austerity spending cuts cost average person nearly half year in life expectancy, finds study

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The government's austerity spending cuts cost the average person in the UK nearly half a year in life expectancy between 2010 and 2019, according to a new working paper published by the London School of Economics and Political Science's (LSE) International Inequalities Institute and written by researchers at LSE and King's College London.

The research found that life expectancy dropped by an average of five months for women and three months for men. This equates to about 190,000 excess deaths, or a 3% increase in mortality rates over the period.

Factors responsible for these deaths include "deaths of despair" from drug poisoning. Changes in health care spending and welfare accounted for 1,000 such deaths which were preventable—approximately 3% of all drug-poisoning deaths in England and Wales between 2010 and 2019.

Another factor in the increased [death](#) rate was the decline in ambulance response quality during the austerity years. In 2008, ambulances reached the scene within 19 minutes for 96.6% of [emergency calls](#), but by 2017 this had dropped to 89.6%. Part of this decline was due to changes in health care spending, resulting in over 35,000 people being at higher mortality risk.

Dr. Yonatan Berman, Lecturer in Economics at King's College London and Visiting Fellow at the LSE's International Inequalities Institute, and one of the authors of the working paper, said, "The level of excess deaths resulting from austerity measures represents a very substantial

loss for society.

"And our estimates are likely to be conservative. The true effects of austerity could be even more severe and enduring given that the impact of these reforms builds over time. Economic hardship can, for example, lead to changes in lifestyle and nutrition which could have important health implications that only become clear over a period of several decades.

"These long-term consequences serve as a clear warning about the need to consider the future impact of any policies that are carried out today."

The research also revealed that regional disparities in life expectancy across the UK widened. Before 2010, the average life expectancy gap between more and less-affected areas was stable at about 1.6 years, but by 2019, this gap had widened to 1.9 years. The North East of England, the East Midlands, South Wales, and the Glasgow City Region were among the hardest hit.

The researchers compared local authority districts across the UK that experienced varying levels of austerity, both before and after the 2010 austerity measures were implemented. This allowed them to identify changes in [life expectancy](#) and [mortality rates](#) during the 2010s that were likely attributable to [austerity](#) measures rather than to pre-existing differences between districts.

Provided by London School of Economics

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