Reviewer’s report

Title: Trends in cause-specific mortality by marital status among elderly Norwegian men and women

Version: 1 Date: 25 March 2011

Reviewer: Michael Murphy

Reviewer’s report:

This is a sensible paper that adds to previous studies but extending the coverage to the high-quality Norwegian data and analysing by cause of death.

Minor r points
P. 2 Replace “Relatively” by “Relative”
P. 8 Sentence “It is separately ...” need rephrasing along with the remainder of this paragraph.

Discretionary points
P.3 Discus whether these studies exclude institutional populations, which may account for differing conclusions.
P.6 Older people less likely to have been recently divorced (“single” seems to be used sometimes to refer to never-married and to include the formerly-married – the terminology could be tightened up with use of unmarried, non-married etc. throughout the paper).
Divorced men may have less access to social support from children if estrangement took place when the children were small.
P. 8 The reduction in proportions (not necessarily numbers) of widows is largely due to changing sex differentials in mortality.
Could s.e.s be given in the Figures?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests