Reviewer’s report

Title: Contribution of main causes of death to social inequalities in mortality in the whole population of Scania, Sweden

Version: 2 Date: 13 January 2006
Reviewer: Annette Leclerc

Reviewer’s report:

General
This paper is interesting, and well written; the methodology is sound. I agree with the comments of the authors about the fact that it is useful to have both absolute and relative measures of inequalities. Having in the same paper results for various age groups is also a strength of the paper.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The calendar years of the study, 1991 to 2002, must be given in the abstract, and at the beginning of the paper. In the present version of the paper, the reader must wait for page 8 before getting the information that deaths are for the period 1991-2002.
Social situation of those in the age group 0-20, according to household occupational status. This information should be given at different places in the paper: at the end of page 4 (introduction), and also as notes in the tables.

mortality of those out of the workforce, 21-30 years. This group includes students, one would expect mortality of students to be relatively low. The authors should add a comment on that.

page 15: "it is well-known that...breast cancer is more common in higher SEP groups". This is not so obvious for the most recent period, in different countries, see for example an article recently published (2006) by G.Menvielle and al in British Journal of Cancer.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Abstract, end of "results": attributed to ... "to" is missing

Study population: "about one million every year" for the Skåne population seems odd (the population is expected to be rather stable)

Page 7, COPD among causes of death, give more than an acronym

page 14, line 3: "is partly an artifact". I would not use the term "artifact". Yes, relative inequalities cannot be very high, since the denominators are not so small. But "artefact" suggest that it is not a sound result.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Since there is no space restriction, it might be interesting to have the results in table 2 (at least, the death rates), for causes of deaths as detailed as in table 3. Same comments for tables 5 and 6

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests