Author's response to reviews

Title: Falling behind: life expectancy in US counties from 2000 to 2007 in an international context

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Alan,

Attached is our resubmission for our paper, “Falling Behind: life expectancy in US counties from 2000 to 2007 in an international context”. We have provided a point by point response to Luc Bonneux’s comments. We believe, however, that his comments are completely inappropriate and reflect a lack of awareness of the field. He has two major claims: first, the life expectancy is not a useful measure and that the SMR is preferable, and second, that sophisticated Bayesian methods should not be used in mortality estimation. Both of these claims border on the absurd. As I am sure the Editors are aware, nearly all statistical authorities in nearly all nations produce estimates of life expectancy at birth and produce them for subnational entities. They also use various types of Bayesian methods to deal with small sample sizes. Luc Bonneux’s comments are out of line with the standards of the field. He is essentially asking us to write a paper on a different topic, namely the SMR. Our goal is to estimate life expectancy at the local level. Our paper uses the appropriate methods and, critically, provides within the paper a robust validation of the methods used. The reviewer appears to be quite uninformed on these methods and to not have even read or perhaps understood the validation presented.

We strongly hope that our responses have been sufficient to address any concerns the editors may have about the scientific merits of our study.

Kind regards,

Christopher J.L. Murray
Institute Director