Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 7 February 2011

Reviewer: James Holt

Reviewer's report:

I have read the authors' replies to my initial review comments. I believe they have fully and adequately described their responses, which were quite reasonable. I appreciate the clarifications that they made to the manuscript. I also appreciate their provision of the annual life expectancy data as an online appendix. I have only one remaining question, which arose during their revision to the manuscript, and is not on the original version: In Figure C, Alaska now appears in a light green shade, which does not correspond to any of the legend values. I believe this may be a simple error (e.g., data is available for Alaska and could be mapped, but for some reason the shading for Alaska is not correct) and could be easily corrected by the authors. I have no further questions for the authors. I believe the paper is acceptable for publication (with the one minor issue, mentioned above). Thank you.

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

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.

As I am a U.S. government employee, I request that the following disclaimer be included with any of my comments that are published:

"The findings and conclusions of this review are those of the reviewer and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention."