

Dorling, D. (2018) Stalling life expectancy in the UK, Rapid Response, British Medical Journal, September 28th, <https://www.bmj.com/content/362/bmj.k4050/rr>

Response to Editorial

Stalling life expectancy in the UK

BMJ 2018; 362 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k4050> (Published 27 September 2018)

The author claims that: "*In summary, the general deceleration in mortality improvements in many high income countries since 2010 has been compounded by periodic bad winters.*"

ONS have reported the deceleration to be greater in the UK than all other 20 affluent countries they compared, with the sole exception of the USA. In many of those countries there was no deceleration and, in some, an actual acceleration of previous improvements. The Conservative MP Robert Court and others responded to this news by suggesting a natural plateauing was occurring and that there are many complex factors at play including cold winter weather since 2010 (1).

In the winter of 2011/12 UK "temperatures in the UK were 0.9 °C above the 1971-2000 average" (2).

In the winter of 2012/13 UK temperatures were "0.4 °C below the 1981-2010 average." (3). However, note that the baseline had change, and the largest rise in excess deaths had not yet begun.

In the winter of 2013/2014 UK temperatures were "0.5 °C above the 1981-2010 average." (4).

In the winter of 2014/2015 UK temperatures were "0.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average." (5).

In the winter of 2015/2016 UK temperatures were "1.8 °C above the 1981-2010 average" (6)!

In the winter of 2016/2017 UK temperatures were "1.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average." (7)!

In the winter of 2017/2018 UK temperatures were "0.2 °C below the 1981-2010 average". However, in the December of that winter, when that year's rapid rise in deaths began: "temperatures 0.4 °C above average" (8).

So, when was this series of "periodic bad winters"?

I am a professor of Geography. I understand how to measure the weather.

I sincerely hope my colleagues from epidemiology, social statistics, public health, social policy and virology will help explain what else in this article needs to be questioned. But for a start, please let us know when this series of periodic bad winters in the UK began and when it ended during the 2011-2018 period?

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(1) Hiam, L. and Dorling, D. Improving life expectancy used to be the UK's forte – now it's falling behind, *The Conversation*, August 16th

2018, <https://theconversation.com/improving-life-expectancy-used-to-be-the-uks...>

(2) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2012/winter>

(3) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2013/winter>

(4) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2014/winter>

(5) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2015/winter>

(6) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2016/winter>

(7) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2017/winter>

(8) <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2018/winter>

Competing interests: No competing interests