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**Did Mass Privatisation really increase post-Communist male mortality?**

Background: A recent article in the Lancet, by David Stuckler, Larry King and Martin McKee, investigated anew the fluctuations in adult male mortality rates that have come to characterise the so-called post-communist mortality crisis. Adopting a cross-country, time-series perspective the authors examined how the economic policy strategies of the 1990s impacted upon observed fluctuations in mortality. They conclude that the adoption of a strategy of rapid (mass) privatisation contributed to the adverse mortality trends. We subject that finding to closer scrutiny. Methods: Using the same data from which the Stuckler et al claim stems, we present a series of stylised facts that cast doubt on the intuitive plausibility of their findings, we identify a number of problems with their data and we make more plausible assumptions about the dynamic nature of the relationship between mass privatisation and mortality. Findings: The claim that mass privatisation adversely affected male mortality trends in the post-Communist world does not stand up to closer scrutiny. It is not supported empirically and is at odds with what we know about both transition in the post-communist world and about health trends over time in this region. Interpretation: We agree that so-called 'upstream societal conditions' may impact upon health outcomes in potentially significant ways and that understanding these is important. However, we argue that attempts to single out as key particular aggregate economic or policy indicators need to be rigorous, robust and grounded in defensible interpretations of the data and appropriate use of econometrics.