

Session:**Cultural, social, and biological determinants of mortality in past societies.****Organizer: Alice Velková, Department of Demography and Geodemography
Charles University, Prague, Czechia**alice.velkova@natur.cuni.cz

The mortality transition addresses a broad range of socioeconomic and demographic shifts that were caused by rapid changes in the lifestyle of humans, including the size of human groups, diet, physical activity, etc. Since the second half of the 19th century, there has been a significant and lasting decrease in the mortality rate and an increase in the average life as well as a change in the structure of the deceased. Changes in mortality initiated a demographic transition and were often a stimulus for other population changes. It is commonly known that social stratification measured by the size of place of residence, occupation, and level of education, is reflected in the level of mortality. Concerning 19th-century Europe this phenomenon has been fairly well documented. In general, overpopulated and increasingly industrialized cities have posed a threat to human health and life. But socio-economic factors were not only determinants of mortality. Ecological factors were closely related to them, resulting from the level of infrastructure: access to clean water intakes, sewerage system, hygiene level, etc. Increasingly, scientific studies emphasize the role of climatic factors related to precipitation and ambient temperatures, especially extremely high and low temperatures. In the case of a mortality decline, which is reflected in an increase in life expectancy, biological factors cannot be ignored. To date, several biological factors affecting life span have been defined. Researchers have described, among other things, the relationship between the length of life and the body height, parental effects on offspring longevity, the length of parents' life and certain diseases of their offspring, cognitive factors, or the level of reproduction. Life span is a biological variable determined by genetic, environmental, and cultural factors. Equally important was the social environment in which the individual or their family lived. Gradual improvement in living conditions, lifestyle and nutritional habits, sanitary-epidemiological conditions, and medical progress weakened the operation of natural selection. The panel we propose aims to provide a platform for sharing results of interdisciplinary research on changes in mortality, life span, and health status over time, and to place them in a broad cultural context.