

Social inequalities in health in the Balkan countries: a systematic review

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Introduction

In the early 1990s, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia dissolved leading to the formation of countries in the present Balkan region (**Figure 1**).

These political changes over the past 30 years led to profound economic and societal disruptions marked by the breakdown of traditional socialistic regimes and the development of substantial social stratification.

This study include the Balkan countries of: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia (**Figure 2**).



Figure 1. Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991



Figure 2. Current countries of the Balkan Peninsula

Specific Aims

Conducted a systematic review to determine the extent research has been conducted on social inequalities of health across the Balkans.

Methods

Conducted a literature review in Pubmed, SCOPUS, and Web of Science to identify studies with social inequalities in health as the primary outcomes through the search terms: socioeconomic, income, wealth, and education.

Screened articles based on title name and abstract content for full-text analysis.

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility.

Extracted relevant data points from eligible full-text articles for quantitative meta-analysis by developing a novel methodological approach to synthesizing different data reporting schemes using beta coefficients from linear regression across strata independent of the number and nature of classes for social status estimation.

Results

The search yielded 15,363 articles which were then reduced to 71 studies that provided 82 data points (**Figure 3**).

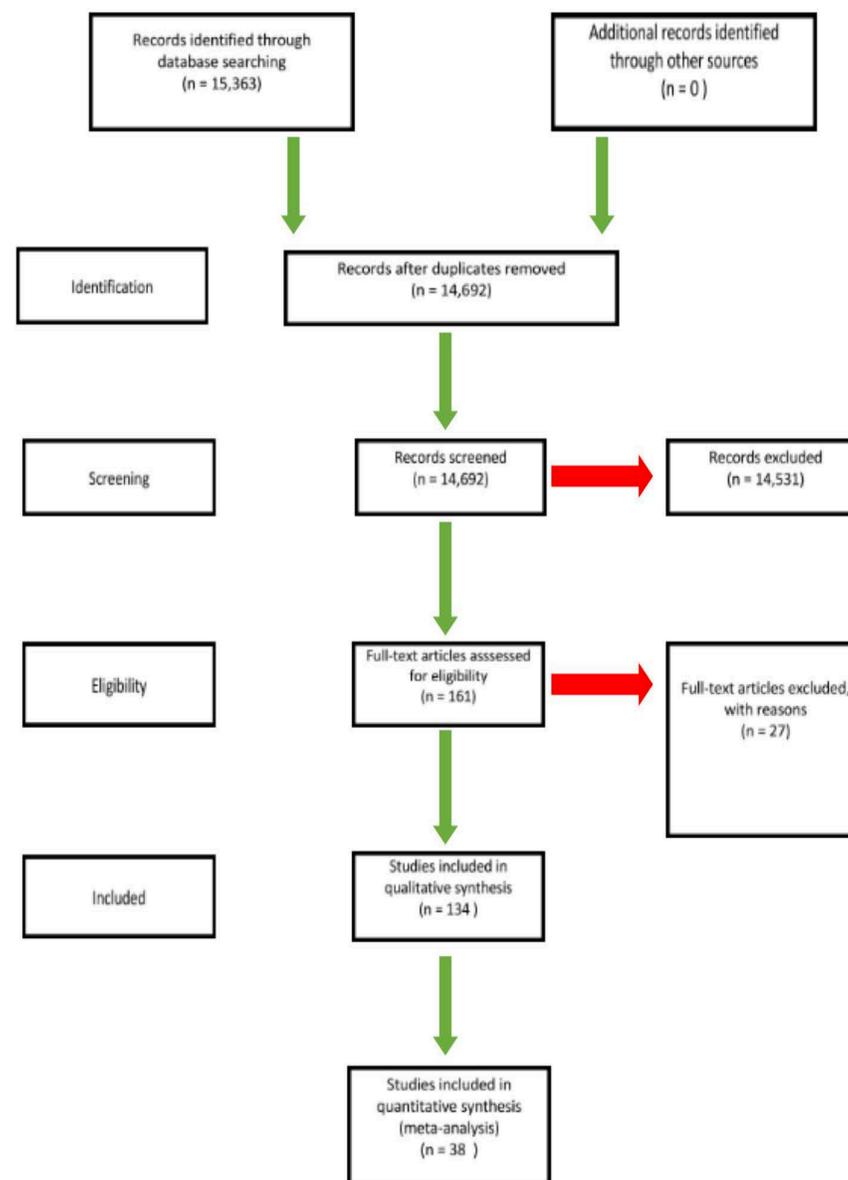


Figure 3. Systematic review search results

Conclusion

The negative effects of social deprivation are widely reported and their health-related outcomes are reflected in higher morbidity and mortality rates of the less affluent.

Some countries in the region better mobilize their researcher capacities towards increased understanding of social inequalities and their effect on the health.

This study provided a framework for the regional research priorities needed for the delivery of the effective interventions, aiming towards the reduction of their negative effects.

Next Steps

The database search identified research conducted to address socioeconomic inequalities in the Balkans.

Next steps should further develop this database.

A data synthesis through meta-analysis should also be conducted. After this is accomplished, we look to publish the results in an international peer-reviewed journal.

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