

## Technical notes<sup>1</sup>

Table 10 (**Deaths by age, sex and urban/rural residence: 1948–1997**) presents deaths by age, sex and urban/rural residence for as many years as possible between 1948 and 1996.

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**Description of variables:** Age is defined as age at last birthday, that is, the difference between the date of birth and the date of the occurrence of the event, expressed in completed solar years. The age classification used in this table is the following: under 1 year, 1–4 years, 5–year age groups through 80–84 years, 85 years and over, and age unknown.

The urban/rural classification of deaths is that provided by each country or area; it is presumed to be based on the national census definitions of urban population that have been set forth at the end of Technical Notes for table 2.

**Reliability of data:** Data from civil registers of deaths which are reported as incomplete (less than 90 per cent completeness) or of unknown completeness are considered unreliable and are set in italics rather than in roman type. Table 18 in the volume containing the general tables and the Technical Notes for that table provide more detailed information on the completeness of death registration. For more information about the quality of vital statistics data in general, and the information available on the basis of the completeness estimates in particular, see section 4.2 of the Technical Notes.

**Limitations:** Statistics on deaths by age and sex are subject to the same qualifications as have been set forth for vital statistics in general and death statistics in particular as discussed in section 4 of the Technical Notes.

The reliability of the data, an indication of which is described above, is an important factor in considering the limitations. In addition, some deaths are tabulated by date of registration and not by date of occurrence; these have been indicated by a (+). Whenever the lag between the date of occurrence and date of registration is prolonged and, therefore, a large proportion of the death registrations are delayed, death statistics for any given year may be seriously affected.

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<sup>1</sup> Demographic Yearbook Historical Supplement 1948–1997, United Nations DYB–CD, Sales No.: E/F.99.XIII.12, United Nations Publications New York, Geneva

As a rule, however, delays in the registration of deaths are less common and shorter than in the registration of live births.

Another factor which limits international comparability is the practice of some countries or areas not to include in death statistics infants who were born alive but died before the registration of the birth or within the first 24 hours of life, thus underestimating the number of deaths under one year of age. Statistics of this type are footnoted.

Because these statistics are classified according to age, they are subject to the limitations with respect to accuracy of age reporting similar to those already discussed in connection with section 3.1.3 of the Technical Notes. The factors influencing inaccurate reporting may be somewhat dissimilar in vital statistics (because of the differences in the method of taking a census and registering a death) but, in general, the same errors can be observed.

The absence of frequencies in the unknown age group does not necessarily indicate completely accurate reporting and tabulation of the age item. It is often an indication that the unknowns have been eliminated by assigning ages to them before tabulation, or by proportionate distribution after tabulation.

International comparability of statistics on deaths by age is also affected by the use of different methods to determine age at death. If age is obtained from an item that simply requests age at death in completed years or is derived from information on year of birth and death rather than from information on complete date (day, month and year) of birth and death, the number of deaths classified in the under-one-year age group will tend to be reduced and the number of deaths in the next age group will tend to be somewhat increased.

A similar bias may affect other age groups but its impact is usually negligible. Information on this factor is given in the footnotes when known.

The comparability of data by urban/rural residence is affected by the national definitions of urban and rural used in tabulating these data. It is assumed, in the absence of specific information to the contrary, that the definitions of urban and rural used in connection with the national population census were also used in the compilation of the vital statistics for each country or area. However, the possibility cannot be excluded that, for a given country or area, the same definitions of urban and rural are not used for both the vital statistics data and the population census data. When known, the definitions of urban used in national population censuses are presented at the end of table 2. As discussed in detail in the Technical Notes for table 2, these definitions vary considerably from one country or area to another.

**Coverage:** Deaths by age, sex and urban/rural residence are shown for 176 countries or areas.

**Earlier data:** Deaths by age and sex have been shown for the latest available year in each issue of the *Yearbook* since the 1955 issue. Data included in this table update the series covering a period of years as follows:

<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>YEARS COVERED</b>
1996	1987-1995
1992	1983-1992
1985	1976-1984
1980	1971-1979
Historical Supplement	1948-1977

Data have been presented by urban/rural residence in each regular issue of the *Yearbook* since the 1967 issue.