

Technical notes¹

Table 11 (**Death rates specific for age, sex and urban/rural residence: 1948–1997**) presents death rates specific for age, sex and urban/rural residence for as many years as possible between 1948 and 1996.

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, and 85 years and over.

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.

Rate computation: Death rates specific for age and sex are the annual number of deaths in each age–sex group (as shown in table 10) per 1,000 population in the same age–sex group.

Death rates by age, sex and urban/rural residence are the annual number of deaths that occurred in a specific age–sex–urban/rural group (as shown in table 10) per 1 000 population in the corresponding age–sex–urban/rural group.

Deaths at unknown age and the population of unknown age were disregarded except as they formed part of the death rate for all ages combined.

It should be noted that the death rates for infants under one year of age in this table differ from the infant mortality rates shown elsewhere, because the latter are computed per 1 000 live births rather than per 1 000 population.

The population used in computing the rates is estimated or enumerated distributions by age and sex. First priority was given to an estimate for the mid–point of the same year second priority to census returns of the year to which the deaths referred and third priority to an estimate for some other point of time in the year.

Rates presented in this table have been limited to those for countries or areas having at least a total of 1000 deaths in a given year. Moreover, rates specific for individual sub–categories based on 30 or fewer deaths are identified by the symbol (●).

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

Reliability of data: Rates calculated using 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: Rates shown in this table are subject to all the same limitations which affect the corresponding frequencies and are set forth in the Technical Notes for table 10.

These include differences in the completeness of registration, the treatment of infants who were born alive but died before the registration of the birth or within the first 24 hours of life, the method used to determine age at death and the quality of the reported information relating to age at death. In addition, some rates are based on deaths tabulated by date of registration and not by date of occurrence; these have been indicated by a (+).

The problem of obtaining precise correspondence between deaths (numerator) and population (denominator) as regards the inclusion or exclusion of armed forces, refugees, displaced persons and other special groups is particularly difficult where age-specific death rates are concerned. In cases where it was not possible to achieve strict correspondence, the differences in coverage are noted. Male rates in the age range 20 to 40 years may be especially affected by this non-correspondence, and care should be exercised in using these rates for comparative purposes.

It should be added that even when deaths and population do correspond conceptually, comparability of the rates may be affected by abnormal conditions such as absence from the country or area of large numbers of young men in the military forces or working abroad as temporary workers. Death rates may appear high in the younger ages, simply because a large section of the able-bodied members of the age group, whose death rates under normal conditions might be less than the average for persons of their age, is not included.

Also, in a number of cases the rates shown here for all ages combined differ from crude death rates shown elsewhere, because in this table they are computed on the population for which an appropriate age-sex distribution was available, while the crude death rates shown elsewhere may utilize a different total population.

The population by age and sex might refer to a census date within the year rather than to the mid-point, or it might be more or less inclusive as regards ethnic groups, armed

forces and so forth. In a few instances, the difference is attributable to the fact that the rates in this table were computed on the mean population whereas the corresponding rates in other tables were computed on an estimate for 1 July. Differences of these types are insignificant but, for convenience, they are not in the table.

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.

In addition to problems of comparability, vital rates classified by urban/rural residence are also subject to certain special types of bias. If, when calculating vital rates, different definitions of urban are used in connection with the vital events and the population data and if this results in a net difference between the numerator and denominator of the rate in the population at risk, then the vital rates would be biased. Urban/rural differentials in vital rates may also be affected by whether the vital events have been tabulated in terms of place of occurrence or place of usual residence.

This problem is discussed in more detail in section 4.1.4.1 of the Technical Notes.

Coverage: Death rates specific for age and sex are shown for 113 countries or areas.

Earlier data: Death rates specific for age and sex have been shown for the latest available year in many of the issues of the *Yearbook* since the 1955 issue. Data included in this table update the series shown in the *Yearbook* and in the recently issued *Population and Vital Statistics Report: Special Supplement* covering a period of years as follows:

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