

Table 21 – Demographic Yearbook 2003

Table 21 presents deaths by marital status, age and sex for the latest available year.

Description of variables: Marital status is defined as the personal status of each individual in relation to the marriage laws and customs of the country.

The marital status classifications used in this table is the following: single (never married), married, in consensual union, married but separated, divorced and not remarried, widowed and not remarried as well as unknown marital status. Unless otherwise specified, when the category of "married but separated" is not shown separately, it can be assumed that persons in this category are shown as "married".

Age is defined as age at last birthday, that is, the difference between the date of birth and the reference date of the age distribution expressed in completed solar years. The age classification used in this table is the following: under 15 years, 5-year age groups through 99, 100 years and over and age unknown. Data for some countries or areas deviate from this standard age classification.

Reliability of data: Data from civil registers of deaths that 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 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 marital status, age and sex are subject to the same qualifications as have been set forth for vital statistics in general as discussed in section 4 of the Technical Notes.

Comparability is also affected by the accuracy of the response to the questions on marital status. Divorced or separated persons may erroneously be reported as single, while those in consensual unions may be reported as married. Also, persons who are divorced may report themselves as single, married or widowed.

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 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 are seriously affected.

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

Another factor that limits international comparability is the practice of some countries or areas to not include in infant-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.

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.

Earlier data: Deaths by marital status, age and sex have been shown for the latest available year in previous issues of the Demographic Yearbook featuring mortality as the special topic. For information on specific years covered, readers should consult the Index.