Knowing about the completeness of death reporting is essential for a number of reasons. First we need to know how complete death reporting is so that we can take remedial actions to improve the situation. Second, when we know how complete death reporting is, we can make the adjustments needed to permit us to use the death rates derived from death registration in such demographic tasks as projecting future populations. The age-and-sex-specific death rates used in these projections may be calculated when registered data on deaths and on the corresponding population by age and sex are available. Even when such data appear to be complete, however, they should not be accepted blindly when being used for such purposes as constructing a life table. Various possibilities exist for age misreporting in population data; such errors may be even more prevalent in age reporting of deaths, causing irregularities in the pattern of age-specific death rates that do not correspond to reality.

This paper presents a number of techniques for evaluating and adjusting data on deaths by age and sex for both missed events (incomplete coverage) and for misreporting of age. In addition to a description of the techniques, computer programs are described which may be used to carry out the required calculations. The few computer programs presented here are but a small portion of the extensive collection of such programs designed to facilitate demographic analysis developed by the U.S Bureau of the Census and soon to be available in the publication POPULATION ANALYSIS WITH MICROCOMPUTERS and by the United Nations Population Division in MortPak.

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