Expanding the Human Mortality Database to include Cause-of-Death Information

Summary

The Human Mortality Database is a unique open-access collection of detailed mortality and population data for 38 countries with complete and reliable vital registration and census data. The HMD currently covers the United States, almost all of Europe, including countries of the former U.S.S.R., Japan, Australia and other mostly high-income countries with rapidly aging populations. First published in 2002, the project is the result of an initial collaboration between two teams of researchers, at the University of California, Berkeley in the United States, and at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany, which have been more recently joined by the French Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris.

In 2016, the researcher and her team focused on the development and completion of the HMD data series down to a cause of death level for an initial set of eight populations: Canada, Czech Republic, England and Wales, France, Japan, Norway, Sweden, and the United States. The aim was to create data series on causes of death from 1950 or the earliest date available up to the present, using a list of 92 categories and 20 broader groupings chosen to minimize the disruptions associated with revisions of the international classification system, without adjusting the underlying data.

The construction of cause-of-death series for the Human Mortality Database involves five basic steps:

1) Collection of input data (death counts by year, sex, age and cause of death)

2) Input data formatting

3) Input data quality assessment

4) Construction of intermediary files (cause-of-death input data and HMD series)

5) Production of the final cause-of-death data series

The HMD cause-of-death portal gives access to:

- The cause-of-death series for each of the eight countries included in the first phase of this project.

- A description of the series and some information regarding the process followed to construct the series.

- The shortlist of the 92 cause-of-death categories and 20 cause-of-death chapters built to summarize the data.

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