Glossary

**Age-standardized rate**
A rate designed to minimize the effects of differences in age composition when comparing rates for different populations.

**ACME**
Automated Classification of Medical Entities; this program automates the underlying cause-of-death coding rules. The input to ACME is the multiple cause-of-death codes (from the ICD) assigned to each entity (e.g. disease condition, accident or injury) listed on cause-of-death certifications, preserving the location and order as reported by the certifier. ACME then applies the WHO rules to the ICD codes and selects an underlying cause of death. ACME has become the de facto international standard for the automated selection of the underlying cause of death.

**Birth**
See “Live birth”.

**Capture–recapture**
Capture–recapture methods can be used to assess the completeness of registration. The basic idea is to use two separate sources or methods to identify births or deaths, and to examine the proportion of cases identified by the second method that were also identified by the first. From this information, it is possible (through mathematical models) to estimate the total number of cases.

Capture–recapture can be used to assist in monitoring trends over time, but it assumes closed populations.

**Causes of death**
“All those diseases, morbid conditions or injuries that either resulted in or contributed to death and the circumstances of the accident or violence that produced any such injuries.” (27)

**Census**
See “Population census”.

**Certification of cause of death**
Process by which a doctor confirms the fact of death, states the causes leading to it and issues a certificate that specifies the underlying cause of death, according to the rules and procedures of the ICD.

**Child mortality**
Deaths of children under 5 years of age (i.e. in the exact age range 0–4 years old); usually measured as the probability of a neonate dying before their 5th birthday.

**Citizen**
A person who holds the legal nationality of the country they are living in and, as such, benefits from all the constitutional rights of that country but also is subject to the obligations and regulations that apply to its citizens.

**Civil registration**
“The continuous, permanent, compulsory, and universal recording of the occurrence and characteristics of vital events (live births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriages and divorces) and other civil status events pertaining to the population as provided by decree, law or regulation, in accordance with the legal requirements in each country. Civil registration establishes and provides legal documentation of such events. These records are also the best source of vital statistics” (7).

**Civil registrar**
Official charged with the responsibility for registering vital events in a defined area (e.g. a country, district, municipality or parish) and for reporting these for legal and statistical purposes.

**Civil society**
The voluntary participation of citizens in the civic and social bodies that form the basis of a functioning society, as opposed to state and commercial institutions.

**Completeness of registration**
The extent to which all births or deaths are registered in a population; usually expressed as a percentage of the total deaths and births in a population. Sometimes also referred to as the coverage of registration. Any deviation from complete coverage is measured by coverage error.

**Delayed registration**
The registration of a vital event after the prescribed period specified in existing laws, rules or regulations (including any specified grace period). Delayed registration is usually considered to be the registration of a vital event one year or more after the event has occurred. (Not to be confused with “late registration”.)

**Demographic surveillance**
The practice of registering, on a continuous basis, all demographic events (including cause of death, which is usually assessed by verbal autopsy) in one or more geographically defined populations. The major drawback of demographic surveillance is that it does not produce nationally representative data but only information for the specific sites chosen.

**Fetal death**
“Death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, irrespective of the duration of the pregnancy; the death is indicated by the fact that after such separation the fetus does not breathe or show any evidence of life, such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or definite movement of voluntary muscles” (27).
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Population census
The total process of collecting, compiling, evaluating, analysing and publishing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specified time, to all persons in a country or in a well delimited part of a country (35). Data from population censuses can be used to estimate birth and death rates. Also, they can provide the best source of data on at-risk populations (numerator and denominators) in small geographical or administrative areas, and the baseline for sample vital registration.

Population register
A mechanism for the continuous recording of selected information pertaining to each member of the resident population of a country or area, making it possible to have up-to-date information about the size and characteristics of the population at selected points in time. Because of the nature of a population register, both its organization and operation should have a legal basis. Population registers start with a base consisting of an inventory of the inhabitants of an area and their characteristics (e.g. date of birth, sex, marital status, place of birth, place of residence, citizenship and language). To assist in locating a record for a particular person, household or family in a population register, a unique identification number is provided for each entity.

The population register can contain other socioeconomic data, such as occupation or education. The population register should be updated by births, deaths, marriages and divorces, which are part of the civil registration system of the country. The population register is also updated by migration. Thus, notifications of certain events, which may have been recorded originally in different administrative systems, are automatically linked to a population register on a current basis. The method and sources of updating should cover all changes, so that the characteristics of individuals in the register remain current (1).

Quality of data
In a vital statistics system, quality of data is usually measured according to the degree of completeness, accuracy, timeliness and availability.

Registrar general
The head of the civil registration office or department with jurisdiction usually extending over the entire national territory.

Registration
The formal act of reporting a birth or death, and obtaining a birth or death certificate issued by the civil registration authority.

Sample vital registration
The registration of all demographic events on a continuous basis (as in full civil registration) but only for a nationally representative sample of administrative areas for which a baseline population census has been taken. Cause of death is assessed from hospital records where these are available. In all other cases, death is first notified to the sample registration office, and the household is later visited and a verbal autopsy is conducted to determine the cause of death. The system yields nationally representative vital statistics that include the major causes of death. If properly conducted and carefully expanded, sample registration is the best way to gradually expand into a national civil registration system. However, if the population under surveillance is too small or not representative, the data will be biased or too small to yield reliable cause-specific death rates.

Sample vital registration with verbal autopsy (SAVVY)
The MEASURE Evaluation project based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the United States Census Bureau have together created a series of sample vital registration with verbal autopsy (SAVVY) manuals for mortality surveillance.10

Stakeholders
Persons or institutions with a shared interest (financial or otherwise) in a given event, process or outcome.

Stillbirth
See “Fetal death”.

Technical assistance
Development aid or cooperation provided by governmental and nongovernmental agencies to assist the economic, social and political development of populations. It also covers the transfer of knowledge from individual experts and scientists to countries as part of cooperative projects.

Underlying cause of death
Either (a) The disease or injury that initiated the train of morbid events leading directly to death; or (b) the circumstances of the accident or violence that produced the fatal injury. The underlying cause of death is used as the basis for the tabulation of mortality statistics.

Usual residence
The geographical location within a country, locality or other civil division where a specified person (the deceased, or a mother or father) usually resides. For vital statistics purposes, the place of usual residence for a birth or fetal death is the place where the mother usually resides.

10 The manuals are available at http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/publications/index.php
### Glossary

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal autopsy</td>
<td>A structured interview with caregivers or family members of households after a death occurs; used to determine the probable cause or causes of death in populations where most deaths occur outside health facilities, and where direct medical certification is rare.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vital event</td>
<td>“The occurrence of a live birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, adoption, legitimation, recognition of parenthood, annulment of marriage, or legal separation” (1).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vital registration</td>
<td>All sanctioned modes of registering individuals and reporting on vital events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vital statistics</td>
<td>Statistics on vital events compiled from all sources of vital-events data (including civil registration, censuses and surveys).</td>
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<td>Vital statistics system</td>
<td>“The total process of (a) collecting information by civil registration or enumeration on the frequency or occurrence of specified and defined vital events, as well as relevant characteristics of the events themselves and the person or persons concerned, and (b) compiling, processing, analyzing, evaluating, presenting, and disseminating these data in statistical form” (1).</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO-FIC</td>
<td>WHO’s Family of international disease and health related classifications.</td>
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