

MORTALITY IN THAILAND AND THE CAUSES OF DEATH : EVIDENCE FROM DEATH CERTIFICATES

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the overall mortality trend in Thailand and emerging problems in terms of causes of death from the Survey of Population Changes and the Death Certificate data. The paper finds that the overall mortality situation for both males and females significantly improves between 1964-1965 and 1995-1996. Infant mortality and the above 65 mortality show measurable improvement. While infectious diseases are still among the leading causes of deaths in Thailand, other causes from risky behaviors and social factors such as hypertension, cerebrovascular diseases, accidents, and suicide are increasingly known to be major causes of death.

Realizing also that accurate mortality data are of crucial importance to assess the mortality situation, another objective of this paper is to discuss the quality of mortality data in Thailand. The findings from the paper suggest a great improvement in the completeness of death registration and poor quality of causes of death data in Thailand, although there still exist a 60-70 per cent incompleteness rate of infant death registration and 40 per cent adult deaths attributed to ill-defined causes. The findings from this paper indicate that a careful examination of the accuracy of the data needs to be carried out before directing targeted policy responses at specific mortality rates. Users of the causes of death data should only take major causes of death into analysis. A larger grouping of the data also makes the analyses more consistent and robust to systematic errors.

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