

## SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENTIALS IN ILL-DEFINED DEATHS IN SRI LANKA, 2010

Gaminiratne Wijesekere\*

**Abstract:** Causes of death statistics derived from civil registration systems are the primary source of information used to guide health policies in countries worldwide. The statistics collected should be of acceptable quality to obtain evidence-based health and medical research. This study examines the extent of deaths in Sri Lanka coded to ill-defined categories (ICD-10 codes R00-R99) and their socio-demographic and regional variations using the data derived from the 2010 Cause of death data file maintained by the Vital Statistics Branch of the Department of Registrar General of Sri Lanka. Of the total deaths registered in 2010, 15 per cent had coded to an ill-defined category. Logistic regression models are used in the study to identify socio-demographic and regional variations in ill-defined deaths. The results of the study showed that the age and sex of the deceased, the type of person certifying causes of death (i.e. medical or not) and the area of registration (i.e. urban, rural or estate sector) to be the factors that explain the presence or absence of deaths assigned to ill-defined categories.

**Keywords:** Death certification; ill-defined deaths; Sri Lanka; vital registration system.

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### Introduction

Registration of death with the certification of the cause of death is a legal document that can be used by family members to claim any property rights, insurance or pension benefits. The cause of death information provided on the certificate is also the foundation for understanding levels and trends in mortality and is valuable in developing, evaluating and monitoring the health policy. The value of the causes of death information for such purposes depends on several factors that include the coverage of death registration, the timeliness of the data, and the reliability of the reported cause of death information. The format of the certificate of cause of death designed and recommended for global use by WHO includes space to record, in sequential order, the immediate cause, the antecedent cause and the underlying cause of death. It also has the provision to document any other condition(s) presented in the deceased that did not directly led to his/her death. Medical coders can determine the underlying cause of death from the information provided on the most recent version of the International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD). In 1993 version 10 of the (ICD-10) came into global use, and version 11 of the ICD will soon replace it.

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\* School of Demography, Australian National University, Australia.  
Email: [gaminirwijesekere@yahoo.com](mailto:gaminirwijesekere@yahoo.com)

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