



NCHS International Statistics Program

About NCHS

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the Nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data-collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

International Activities at NCHS

NCHS collaborates with countries around the world and participates in a wide range of international initiatives. These programs consist of cooperative ventures on analytical and methodological issues, technical assistance, consultations, training, information exchange, and liaison with multinational agencies. Additionally, NCHS sponsors and hosts international meetings and symposia in order to foster the sharing of scientific information. Through these efforts, NCHS seeks to improve the availability and advance the quality and comparability of health data in the United States and other countries.

Bilateral Collaborations

Bilateral activities achieve goodwill and strengthen partnerships between collaborating countries, and offer opportunities for comparing data. NCHS' bilateral collaborations include:

- **Interchange with Statistics Canada:** The collaboration between NCHS and Statistics Canada began in 1999. These two agencies have statistical programs with much in common, including the collection of vital statistics and the conduct of national health population surveys. Every year since 1999, the two agencies have held a 2-day "Interchange" where they share information about common health-related interests, activities, challenges, and achievements.
- **U.S. - India Health Initiative:** This collaboration involves NCHS participation in a U.S. State Department initiative to promote scientific interchange with the Government of India. NCHS is consulting with the Registrar General's Department and the Ministry of Health of India on issues related to civil registration and vital statistics.

Multilateral Collaborations

These collaborations, which benefit from the input of a variety of countries, help set standards to improve data collection and analysis. NCHS' multilateral collaborations include:

- **International Collaborative Effort (ICE) on Injury Statistics and Methodology:** An NCHS initiated collaboration, the ICE on Injury Statistics and Methodology provides a forum for injury researchers to exchange ideas and collaborate on the development of standards for injury data

collection and analysis to improve international comparability of injury statistics. The organization's goal is to provide high-quality data to better assess the causes and consequences of injury, differences in injury occurrence over time and place, and the most effective means of injury prevention and control. Over the past 20 years, researchers from more than 40 countries have participated in collaborative projects or attended an ICE on Injury Statistics conference.

- **International Collaborative Effort on Automating Mortality Statistics:** An NCHS-initiated collaboration involving more than 20 countries, the ICE on Automating Mortality Statistics shares knowledge of and experience with automated systems for coding mortality information, develops and improves existing automated systems, facilitates the transition to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD–11) for mortality, and establishes mechanisms for technical support of automated systems.
- **International Group for Indigenous Health Measurement (IGIHM):** The United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand all have significant indigenous populations with similar health problems, and they share deficiencies in indigenous health data. These issues led health researchers, representatives of national statistical agencies including NCHS, and representatives of indigenous groups to form an international group in 2005 to improve health status measurement of indigenous populations. Several meetings have brought together IGIHM members and other experts to share findings regarding indigenous health status, propose improvements in measurement methodology, and consider related issues such as social determinants of indigenous health.

Collaborations With International Organizations

NCHS collaborates with international organizations to increase the availability of internationally comparable data, track global health statistics, and improve statistical systems worldwide.

World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Center for the Family of International Classifications for North America

WHO Collaborating Center for the Classification of Diseases for North America was established to represent the United States and Canada in international activities related to the study and revision of the Family of International Classification of Diseases and Health Problems. The North American Collaborating Center is located at NCHS. In this capacity, NCHS is responsible for coordinating all official disease classification activities in the United States and Canada relating to the International Classification of Diseases and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, their use, interpretation, and periodic revision. WHO produces international classifications of health so there is a consensual, meaningful, and useful framework which governments, providers, and consumers can use as a common language.

The **International Classification of Diseases (ICD)** is the standard diagnostic tool for epidemiology, health management, and clinical purposes. The most recent version, ICD–10, is designed to promote international comparability in the collection, processing, classification, and presentation of mortality statistics, including providing a format for reporting causes of death on the death certificate. The ICD coding rules improve the usefulness of mortality statistics by giving preference to certain categories, by consolidating conditions, and by systematically selecting a single cause of death from a reported sequence of conditions. A Mortality Reference

Group considers potential updates to the current ICD version to improve the international comparability of mortality data.

The **International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)** is a classification of health and health-related domains. These domains are classified from body, individual, and societal perspectives. ICF is WHO's framework for measuring health and disability at both individual and population levels.

United Nations

The **Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG)** was created by the United Nations Statistical Commission. NCHS hosted the first meeting in 2002 and serves as the secretariat for the Group. NCHS has chaired the steering committee since its beginning. It is a cooperative effort among national statistical offices of developed and developing countries, international statistical organizations, and international organizations representing persons with disabilities. The Group works to develop internationally comparable disability measures for censuses and national surveys.

Other goals include improving the collection and interpretation of information on disability, enhancing comparability with other national and international data collections, and providing the more detailed information necessary to fully understand the complexities of disability. The Washington Group has developed a short set of questions for use on censuses and surveys that can be used to monitor progress in meeting the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Group has also developed an extended set of functioning questions across a broader range of domains that can be used in surveys and as the basis of targeted disability modules or surveys.

The **United Nations Statistics Division** compiles and distributes global statistical information, develops standards and norms for statistical activities, and supports countries' efforts to strengthen their national statistical systems. NCHS provides the Division with U.S. vital statistics data for a yearly demographic report, and it is an active partner in improving health statistics worldwide.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

In collaboration with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG), **UNICEF** recognized the need for a module to produce internationally comparable data on child functioning and disability. In response, UNICEF and WG developed a draft module for children aged 2–17 years with questions in the following domains: seeing, hearing, walking, self-care, communication or comprehension, learning, emotions, behavior, attention, coping with change, relationships, and playing.

Additionally, UNICEF and WG have begun work on the development of a survey module that will focus on environmental factors and the measurement of facilitators and barriers to school participation. The domains identified for further development include attitudes, getting to school, accessibility within the school, and affordability.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED)

NCHS works with OECD on projects that facilitate international comparison of health data across a variety of measures. NCHS provides OECD with data for **OECD Health Statistics 2013**, a comprehensive source of comparable statistics on health and health systems across OECD countries. Data on topics such as health status, the determinants of health, health care activities, and health expenditure and financing are featured in the OECD publication, *Health at a Glance*. NCHS also serves as the U.S. representative to OECD's Health Care Quality Indicator, a project aimed at comparing the quality of health care across OECD member countries.

Special Projects

NCHS engages in a number of special projects, contributing its expertise to improve health-related data collections. An example is the **Global Program for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Improvement**, a collaboration between NCHS and the Center for Global Health through which country demonstration projects in Kenya, Malawi, and Morocco have been established to improve their civil registration and vital statistics systems. These projects employ a variety of tools and activities, including recent advances in mobile technology to address the unique combination of system deficiencies and barriers found in each country. As part of this program, NCHS collaborates with various regional offices of the United Nations and World Health Organization on related civil registration and vital statistics activities.

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs.htm>.

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