

# ABS causes of death collection, QS

## Identifying and definitional attributes

<b>Metadata item type:</b>	Quality Statement
<b>METEOR identifier:</b>	449206
<b>Registration status:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Health</a>, Standard 08/06/2011</li></ul>

## Relational attributes

**Data sources linked to this Quality statement:** [ABS Causes of Death Collection](#)

## Data quality

<b>Institutional environment:</b>	This collection is conducted under the Census and Statistics Act 1905. For information on the institutional environment of the ABS, including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, see <a href="#">ABS Institutional Environment</a> .
<b>Timeliness:</b>	Death records are provided electronically to the ABS by individual Registrars and the National Coroners Information System on a monthly basis for compilation into aggregate statistics on an annual basis. One dimension of timeliness in causes of death registrations data is the interval between the occurrence and registration of a death. As a result, a small number of deaths occurring in one year are not registered until the following year or later.
<b>Accessibility:</b>	Causes of death data are available in a variety of formats on the ABS website under the 3303.0 product family. Further information on deaths and mortality may be available on request. The ABS observes strict confidentiality protocols as required by the Census and Statistics Act (1905). This may restrict access to data at a very detailed level.
<b>Interpretability:</b>	Information on some aspects of statistical quality may be hard to obtain as information on the source data has not been kept over time. This is related to the issue of the administrative rather than statistical purpose of the collection of the source data. Information on data sources, terminology, classifications and other technical aspects associated with death statistics can be found in Causes of Death, Australia, (cat. no 3303.0) in the Explanatory Notes, Appendices and Glossary on the ABS website.
<b>Relevance:</b>	<p>The ABS Causes of Death collection includes all deaths that occurred and were registered in Australia, including deaths of persons whose usual residence is overseas. Deaths of Australian residents that occurred outside Australia may be registered by individual Registrars, but are not included in ABS deaths or causes of death statistics.</p> <p>Data in the Causes of Death collection include demographic items, as well as causes of death information, which is coded according to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). ICD is the international standard classification for epidemiological purposes and is designed to promote international comparability in the collection, processing, classification, and presentation of causes of death statistics. The classification is used to classify diseases and causes of disease or injury as recorded on many types of medical records as well as death records. The ICD has been revised periodically to incorporate changes in the medical field. The 10th revision of ICD (ICD-10) has been used since 1997.</p>

**Accuracy:**

Information on causes of death is obtained from a complete enumeration of deaths registered during a specified period and are not subject to sampling error. However, causes of death data sources are subject to non-sampling error which can arise from inaccuracies in collecting, recording and processing the data.

Although it is considered likely that most deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) Australians are registered, a proportion of these deaths are not registered as Indigenous. Information about the deceased is supplied by a relative or other person acquainted with the deceased, or by an official of the institution where the death occurred and may differ from the self-identified Indigenous origin of the deceased. Forms are often not subject to the same best practice design principles as statistical questionnaires, and respondent and/or interviewer understanding is rarely tested. Over-precise analysis of Indigenous deaths and mortality should be avoided.

Causes of death statistics are released with a view to ensuring that they are fit for purpose when released. Supporting documentation for causes of death statistics are published and should be considered when interpreting the data to enable the user to make informed decisions on the relevance and accuracy of the data for the purpose the user is going to use those statistics. To meet user requirements for timely data it is often necessary to obtain information from the administrative source before all information for the reference period is available (eg finalisation of coronial proceedings). A balance needs to be maintained between accuracy (completeness) of data and timeliness, taking account of the different needs of users.

Causes of death data for 2007, has been subject to revision. All coroner certified deaths registered after 1 January 2007 will be subject to a revision process. This is a change from previous years where all ABS processing of causes of death data for a particular reference period was finalised approximately 13 months after the end of the reference period. Where insufficient information was available to code a cause of death (e.g. a coroner certified death was yet to be finalised by the Coroner), less specific ICD codes were assigned as required by the ICD coding rules. The revision process enables the use of additional information relating to coroner certified deaths as it becomes available over time. This results in increased specificity of the assigned ICD-10 codes. Causes of death data for 2007 coroner certified deaths were updated as more information became available. Revised data for 2007 has been published in the 2008 Causes of death publication, released in March 2010. 2007 causes of death will be revised and published again in the publication relating to the 2009 collection due for release in 2011. At this time the first round of revisions for 2008 causes of death data will also be published. Revisions will only impact on coroner certified deaths, as further information becomes available to the ABS about the causes of these deaths. See [Causes of Death, Australia, 3303.0.](#)

**Coherence:**

The international standards and recommendations for the definition and scope of causes of deaths statistic in a vital statistics system are set out in the Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System Revision 2, published by the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD). Consistent with the UNSD recommendations, the ABS defines a death as the permanent disappearance of all evidence of life at any time after live birth has taken place. In addition, the UNSD recommends that the deaths to be counted include all deaths 'occurring in every geographic area and in every population group comprising the national area'. For the purposes of Australia, this includes all deaths occurring within Australia as defined by the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) that applies at the time.

Registration of deaths is compulsory in Australia under relevant State/Territory legislation. However, each State/Territory Registrar has its own death registration form. Most data items are collected in all states and territories and therefore statistics at a national level are available for most characteristics. In some cases, different wording of questions asked on the registration form may result in different answers, which may affect final figures.

Use of the supporting documentation released with the statistics is important for assessing coherence within the dataset and when comparing the statistics with data from other sources. Changing business rules over time and/or across data sources can affect consistency and hence interpretability of statistical output. The Explanatory Notes in each issue contains information pertinent to this particular release which may impact on comparison over time