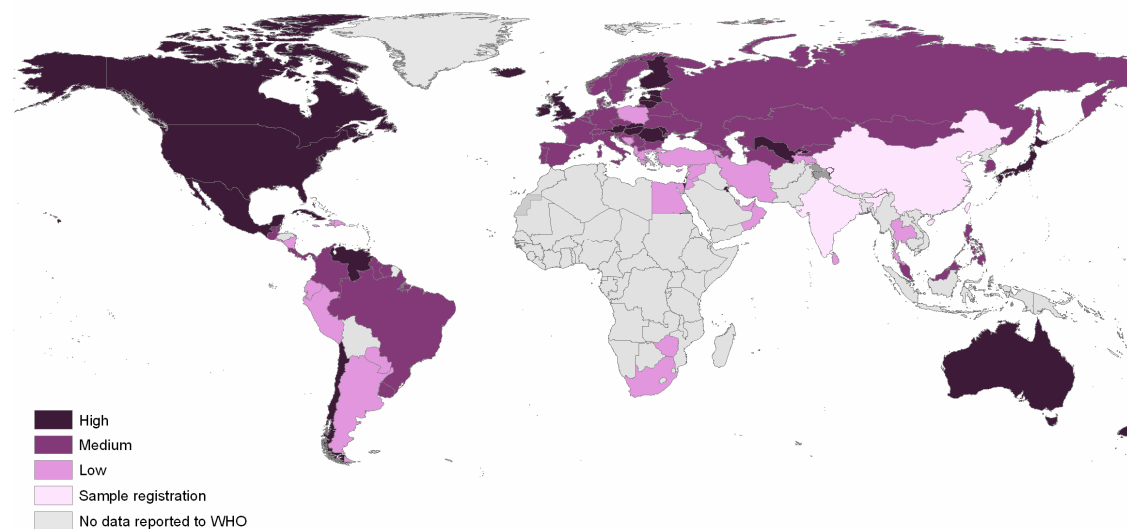


## Quality of cause-of-death information: a challenge in large part of the world

Accurate and timely data on deaths and causes of death with medical certification are essential. WHO collects information on causes of death from its Member States annually. But for more than a fourth of the world's population – largely in Africa, South-East Asia and the Middle East – there are no recent data available to WHO. These are the regions where much of the burden of disease falls. Altogether, 115 Member States have some form of death registration known to WHO. This includes China and India which also have sample vital registration systems.

An assessment of the quality of cause-of-death information by WHO suggests that ideal civil registration systems operate in only 29 of 115 countries that report such statistics to WHO. These systems represent less than 13 % of the world population. In the remaining countries, mortality statistics suffer from incomplete registration of births and deaths, and incorrect reporting of the cause of death and ages.

### Quality of cause-of-death information from national civil registration systems, based on latest data received from WHO Member States, *circa 2003*



The ultimate goal should be to establish complete vital registration with medical certification of deaths in all countries. National governments, with the support of international organizations, need to improve the coverage and quality of vital registration systems.

At the same time, complementary approaches are needed to respond to the demand for timely information and to assess the performance of the systems themselves. WHO, in collaboration with its partners, is working to improve the quality of data that underlies its overall estimates of mortality by age, sex and cause. These efforts include making better use of household surveys and censuses, implementing standardized verbal autopsy instruments, and using data from partial vital registration and other sources.