

# Estimating Infant Mortality Trends from Child Survivorship Data †

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## CONCLUSION

Questions on child survivorship have been included in dozens of national population censuses over the past 20 years and much of this information (though by no means all) has been analyzed by indirect methods. Despite this extensive experience with the problems both of data collection and analysis the notion is still occasionally met that such questions are not practicable in large-scale data collection. The experience of the last two decades refutes this notion decisively and the applications to Costa Rica and Malaysia given here confirm the general conclusion. The Costa Rican example shows that indirect methods can give results quite as good as direct methods, and the example of Malaysia shows that indirect methods may give useful results even when they are substantially less than perfect.

Both the discussion of differential infant mortality by age of mother and the applications to Costa Rica and Malaysia indicate that child survivorship for 15–19 year old women is likely to be very seriously biased, a point which is generally appreciated in the field, but which seems not to have received much emphasis in print. More surprisingly, the Costa Rican application shows no evidence of deterioration in the data until well past age 50 and the Malaysian application suggests that data at ages 45–49 are quite as good as at ages 20–24. This refutes the widely held notion that response error rises substantially with age below age 50 and suggests that the common practice of ignoring information from women over age 30 or 35 may amount to throwing away half the available data. There is remarkably little published evidence to support the view that responses by women in the second half of the reproductive span are so afflicted with response error that they should be ignored for mortality estimation purposes as a matter of routine. The obvious conclusion is that one should make estimation calculations for all available data (within reasonable limits) and evaluate the results before deciding which age groups to reject. This has the advantage of accumulating evidence of response errors in the data as well as not failing to make the most of the available data.

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## (Excerpt)

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