

DID THE CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON LEAVE A SCAR ON THE COUNTRY'S MORTALITY PATTERN?

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PAPER SUMMARY

General Background

Lebanon experienced an endemic war from 1975 to 1990. The war had a devastating effect on the country's infrastructure and its population. About 7% of the Lebanese died, nearly 10% were seriously injured and more than one-third emigrated.

Studies aimed at assessing the impact of war on the various population dynamics have been confronted by the lack of data in the country, especially when the last population census was conducted in 1932. Incomplete vital registration has been a great impediment to mortality studies in the country. Earlier estimates of mortality were based on small-scale sample surveys conducted at sub-national level and cannot be considered as representative of the mortality situation prevailing in the country. The present paper attempts to overcome this limitation by using nationally representative data made available recently.

Objectives

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

- To assess the general health conditions and the characteristics of the health system in Lebanon.
- To estimate and analyze the levels of infant, child and adult mortality and expectation of life at birth (e_0) in Lebanon.
- To assess the impact of war on mortality and its pattern in Lebanon.

Methodology

The analysis is based on the information on deaths by age and sex, extracted from the vital registration system for three consecutive years: 1997, 1998 and 1999. It is important to note here that this is the only and latest data on deaths by age and sex available in the country.

The paper also utilizes the data of sample surveys conducted in Lebanon in 1996:

- The Population and Housing Survey (PHS) conducted in 1995-1996 by the Ministry of Social Affairs in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- The Lebanon Maternal and Child Health Survey (LMCHS) undertaken in 1996 (a sub-sample from PHS) by the Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with the World Health Organization, within the Pan Arab Project for Child Development (PAPCHILD).

Early age mortality was assessed using LMCHS results on child and infant mortality and information on the number of children ever born and those surviving to a woman classified by age and duration of marriage. For the estimation of adult mortality, the ‘deaths distribution method’ was applied to data on deaths by age and sex provided by the vital registration system.

Results

The study provides an estimation of infant, child and adult mortality rates. In addition, the life table for Lebanon has been constructed.

Conclusion

Analysis of the data reveals that the level of mortality is typical of countries in an advanced stage of the demographic and epidemiological transitions.

The paper attempts to answer the question “Did the civil war in Lebanon leave a scar on the country’s mortality pattern?”. Interestingly, the impact of war on the age pattern is particularly visible in the case of males. The results presented in this paper may be found useful by administrators and policy makers..