

Call for Papers

Special Issue: Sources and Databases on Causes of Death in Historical Societies (1800–1950) in *Historical Life Course Studies*

Since the 1800s, causes of death have been systematically recorded in various types of historical registries, including parish registers, civil records, and hospital logs. Registration of causes of death was crucial for monitoring population health in earlier societies. However, procedures for collecting this information varied across countries and over time, often reflecting local and national regulations governing record-keeping practices. In recent years, many of these historical sources have been digitized and transformed into databases. These databases are now invaluable tools for reconstructing and analyzing the health status and level of medical care of past populations. They also allow for comparative studies across different populations, regions, and time periods.

As part of the COST-Action GREATLEAP, the objective of this special issue of *The Historical Life Course Studies* ([open access](#) and [Q1 journal](#)) is to provide an overview of sources and databases that record individual-level causes of death from 1800 to 1950. The goal is to enable the study of specific populations during this period.

We invite original articles that explore sources and databases on causes of death, with an emphasis on the following: types of records; volume, variety, and validity of sources; accessibility of records; processes by which sources were transformed into databases; types and content of the final databases; procedures for data coding; quality and reliability of historical medical statistics; previous results obtained using the database; and the research potential and suggestions for future uses.

Submissions are welcome from various fields, including history, historical demography, epidemiology, human biology, sociology, forensic anthropology, and related disciplines. Manuscripts should be between 4,000 and 6,000 words in length.

Authors of all accepted manuscripts will be invited to present their work at a workshop in Bologna, Italy, on September 9, 2025, held the day before the 5th conference of the European Society for Historical Demography. Financial support will be available through the COST-Action [GREATLEAP](#).

Proposed structure for all papers:

- 1). Introduction: (National) context of the development of cause-of-death statistics
- 2). Description of cause-of-death source(s)
- 3). Development of the database: construction and description
- 4). Recent research using the sources/databases
- 5). Future research and/ or potential uses of the sources/databases

Timeline:

- Deadline for expression of interest: 9 December 2024.
- Notification of acceptance: before Christmas 2024
- Deadline for working paper submission to guest editors and workshop organizers: 27 June 2025
- Peer review by double-blind reviewers: July–August 2025
- Workshop: 9 September 2025
- Deadline for final paper submission to HLCS: 15 November 2025
- Planned publication of special issue: mid-2026 [date to be confirmed]

Submission details:

Please express your interest and address any queries to **all four email addresses by December 9**: tim.riswick@ru.nl; michailraftakis@gmail.com; grazyna.liczbinska@amu.edu.pl; and, elena_crinela@yahoo.com

Special Issue Editors:

Tim Riswick, Radboud University, Nijmegen (The Netherlands)

Michail Raftakis, University of Bologna, Bologna (Italy)

Grażyna Liczbińska, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (Poland)

Elena Crinela Holom, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca (Romania)