

## History

### Vital Statistics – Stillbirth Database

(Survey number 3234)

Stillbirth is currently defined as the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of conception, which did not at any time after birth breathe or show other sign of life. In 2001, most provinces and all three territories required a stillbirth with a gestational age of at least 20 weeks or a birth weight of at least 500 grams to be registered. In Quebec and Saskatchewan (and New Brunswick prior to November 1996), only stillbirths weighing at least 500 grams were required to be registered, regardless of the gestational age. Until 1997, a gestational age of at least 20 weeks was required for stillbirths to be registered in Prince Edward Island, regardless of the birth weight.

Starting in 1959, the definition of a stillbirth was revised to conform, in substance, to the definition of “fetal death” recommended by the World Health Organization. At the same time, the compulsory registration of stillbirths was extended to 20 weeks’ gestation – from 28 weeks – and the new period of gestation incorporated into the definition: “Stillbirth means the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother, after at least 20 weeks’ pregnancy, of a product of conception in which, after such expulsion or extraction, there is no breathing, beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or unmistakable movement of voluntary muscle.”

Provinces implemented the new definition at different times, as shown in the table below:

<b>Province</b>	<b>Implementation Date of Revised (1959) Stillbirth Definition</b>
Nova Scotia	March 1959
Manitoba	August 1959
Alberta	January 1, 1960 24 or more weeks or 750 grams weight
	January 1, 1963 20 or more weeks or 500 grams weight
Saskatchewan	January 1, 1961
Quebec	January 1, 1961
Ontario	December 15, 1961
New Brunswick	January 1, 1962
British Columbia	July 1, 1962
Prince Edward Island	January 1, 1964
Newfoundland	1986

Prior to 1959 the following definition of stillbirth was incorporated in the vital statistics legislation of the provinces: "Stillbirth means the birth of a fetus, after at least 28 weeks’ pregnancy, which, after complete separation from the mother, does not show any sign of life."