

## The International Database on Longevity (IDL)

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In spite of the efforts made at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s by Vaino Kannisto and Roger Thatcher to compile the data of mortality for the oldest-old from more than thirty countries (Kannisto, 1994), we still know little about the trajectories of mortality beyond age 105 years. Although the number of deaths occurring beyond this age remains negligible, this information is fundamental because it makes it possible to prove the existence or not of a limit to the human longevity. Whereas an uninterrupted increase in death rates with age would suggest the existence of a limit to the human longevity, expressed in years, on the contrary a levelling off for the same rates would suggest a limit for the death rates. On the one hand human longevity itself would be limited, on the other hand observed longevity would mainly depend on the levels of the mortality ceiling. In order to be able to decide between these two assumptions, fundamental for the orientation of risk factors research, an international database on human longevity (IDL) was recently set up by INSERM, INED and the Max Planck Institute. This database to which ten countries take an active part already gathered the biographical data of 522 individuals having lived more than 110 years. Some results are presented and discussed.