

IN THIS ISSUE

INFANT mortality in the United States had declined to the low level of 26 per 1,000 live births in 1956 and was only 23.2 for the white population. A question frequently asked is "Are we approaching an irreducible minimum in mortality in the first year of life?" In the article entitled "The Lower Limit of the Infant Mortality Rate in the United States," C. A. McMahan examines the major causes of death among infants and estimates attainable minimum levels. He concludes that it is not unreasonable to expect rates in the foreseeable future in the range between 7.6 and 12.3 per 1,000 births.

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Surveys of population groups are used extensively to study social and health problems, but frequently interpretation of results is made difficult by the failure to obtain cooperation from or to locate some members of the population. Is the person who refuses to be interviewed different from others and do these "missed" persons cause the results to be not representative of the total group? These questions of bias in survey data and of characteristics of non-cooperators are discussed by Ann Cartwright for a study conducted in a housing development near London in the paper entitled "The Families and Individuals Who Did Not Cooperate on a Sample Survey." In this study persons and families who refused to give more than one interview differed to some extent from those who completed a series of interviews, but information from other sources for those who refused to be interviewed or were not located indicates that they were more similar to the persons who completed the interviews than to those who did not. Although sources of bias and factors affecting cooperation vary greatly for different sur-

veys, this report by Miss Cartwright should be helpful to others in searching for sources of bias.



In recent years various population surveys have included questions on ideal number of children, number of children desired, and number of children expected. The April, 1955, issue of the *Quarterly* carried an article based on materials of this type collected in the Detroit Area Survey, which is conducted periodically by the University of Michigan. Since the recent economic recession was believed to be particularly severe in Detroit, the authors of the earlier report designed a study to test the impact of the recession on the "expected size of family" reported in 1955. The results are described in the paper by Doctors David Goldberg, Harry Sharp, and Ronald Freedman "The Stability and Reliability of Expected Family Size Data."



A paper by Dr. Robert Gutman, "Birth and Death Registration in Massachusetts. IV. The System Attains its Basic Goals, 1870-1900" is the concluding one of this series. The author describes the struggle between the statisticians and public health workers on the one hand and the General Court and Secretary of State on the other regarding the responsibility for and function of the registration of vital events in Massachusetts. "The outcome of the campaign was satisfactory to both physicians and the Government, for the reason that it preserved the conception of the birth and death records as important legal documents and at the same time enabled the records to be used to the maximum degree for studying public health." Doubtless there are differences of opinion regarding the present status of the vital statistics system in Massachusetts. Dr. Gutman's series of articles leaves no room to doubt the pioneering rôle of the Bay State in this field in earlier times.