

Definitions of system attributes

Sensitivity -- refers to the proportion of cases of a disease (or other health-related event) detected by the surveillance system...[or]... the ability to detect outbreaks, including the ability to monitor changes in the number of cases over time.

False alarm rate -- refers to the proportion of false positive signals generated by a surveillance system.

Timeliness -- refers to the time taken to transmit information between each step of the surveillance system.

Data quality -- refers to the accuracy of data that is inputted into a system. Adequate data quality is a prerequisite for validity.

Representativeness -- refers to the population and geographic capture of a surveillance system, and a surveillance system's ability to accurately describe the occurrence of events over time and their distribution in the population by place and person.

Simplicity -- refers to both its structure and ease of operation [of a surveillance system].

Acceptability -- refers to the willingness of persons in the sponsoring agency that operates the system and persons outside the sponsoring agency (e.g., persons who are asked to report data) to use the system.

Usefulness -- refers to the contribution to the prevention and control of adverse health-related events, including an improved understanding of the public health implications of such events. In addition, data from a surveillance system can be useful in contributing to performance measures used in needs assessments and accountability systems.