

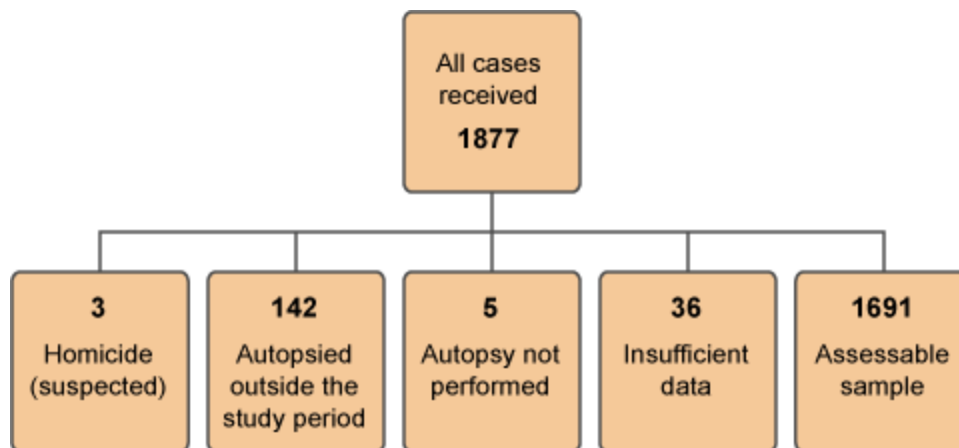
3. Results of study

Participation

A total of 1,877 cases were reported to NCEPOD from 121 coronial jurisdictions across the participating countries, equating to an 88% (121/137) participation rate. Coroners that did not submit cases to NCEPOD were followed up with a reminder letter. Sixteen jurisdictions did not participate. Only one of the 16 jurisdictions that did not participate in the study advised NCEPOD of their wish not to participate. The remaining jurisdictions did not reply to any correspondence.

One hundred and eighty six cases were excluded because they did not meet the study criteria. Three cases were suspected homicides, 142 cases were autopsied outside the study period, and five cases were excluded because an autopsy was not actually performed. A further 36 cases were excluded because NCEPOD did not receive the full autopsy report and therefore those cases were unable to be assessed. This left a total of 1,691 assessable cases for the study sample (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Flow chart showing summary of cases received



NCEPOD acknowledge the possibility that a sample bias may have been introduced into the study due to voluntary participation by coroners and that some cases relevant to the study week may not have been forwarded to NCEPOD. As the coroners' staff were responsible for identifying the cases to be included in the study, there was no way of checking that all cases autopsied during the study week were in fact forwarded to NCEPOD for inclusion. In a few cases the coronial investigation may not have been concluded at the time the data were requested and the lack of information may have resulted in those cases being inadvertently left out of the sample population. (Although some jurisdictions ensured that such cases were forwarded to NCEPOD once the coronial investigation was concluded).

A total of 265 organisational questionnaires were sent to all mortuaries that performed coronial autopsies. Of these, 207 questionnaires were returned (of which, 14 were returned incomplete with a note indicating that coronial autopsies were not undertaken at the mortuary). Therefore, 193 questionnaires were used for analysis, a response rate of 77%. Those mortuaries who had not returned their questionnaire by the stated deadline were followed up with a reminder letter.