

Recommendations on Definition and Classification of Age

Definition

Age refers to the number of completed years between a person's date of birth and the reference date. Where appropriate and subject to data availability, age can be derived from the date of birth and the reference date and stored with 1 decimal place to facilitate statistical analysis.

Data Collection

Information on age may be collected either by obtaining the date of birth, or by asking directly for age at last birthday. Where feasible, it is recommended that age be derived from date of birth, in which day, month and year is reported, as it gives rise to more precise estimates on age. Obtaining the date of birth also provides the flexibility to tabulate and analyse the data on age in different groupings to cater to the particular requirements of specific studies.

For statistical surveys which cover a sample of the population, the survey data on age should be collected and captured in at least five-year groupings as a minimum standard. The sample survey data may be then be presented as five-year age groups or aggregated into broader age groupings depending on the sample size and the cross-tabulations required.

For administrative systems from which relevant statistics are derived by age, the recommendation is to collect and capture date of birth. This gives the flexibility to compile the administrative data on age in different groupings to meet different needs, whether statistical or operational.

Statistical Classification

The age distribution of a population is given either by individual years of age or by age groups. The age groups may be quinquennial age groups (ie in five years' interval) or broad age groups (such as 0-14 years, 15-64 years, 65 years and over). The type of age groups that is more appropriate for a particular survey or study depends on the objective of the survey or study and on data availability.

National Statistical Standards

In general, the age distribution of the population for demographic purposes should be given in five-year age groups extending to 85 years and over.

Age categories: five year age groups

0-4 years	30-34 years	60-64 years
5-9 years	35-39 years	65-69 years
10-14 years	40-44 years	70-74 years
15-19 years	45-49 years	75-79 years
20-24 years	50-54 years	80-84 years
25-29 years	55-59 years	85 years and over

For studies of the economically active or working populations, the age distribution should cover persons in the typical ages for economic activity (eg 15 years and over) and may be given in five-year age groups up to 65 or 70 years and over, depending on sample size of the survey data.

Definitions of Selected Age Groupings and Age-related Variables

For the purpose of compiling and analysing population statistics, the following statistical definitions should be adopted to ensure consistency and comparability of data.

Elderly Persons	Persons aged 65 years and over.
Young-Old	Persons aged 65-74 years
Medium-Old	Persons aged 75 – 84 years
Oldest-Old	Persons aged 85 years and over.
Age Dependency Ratio	Ratio of persons below 15 years old and those aged 65 years and over to persons aged 15 – 64 years.
Child Dependency Ratio	Ratio of persons below 15 years old to persons aged 15 – 64 years.
Old Age Dependency Ratio	Ratio of persons aged 65 years and over to persons aged 15 – 64 years.

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