

Categorization of U.S. Demographics and Their Estimates

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Article:

Demographic information is often an important component of a health survey because a disease or a health behavior may likely be associated with some demographic variables. For example, one study found that the smoking prevalence rate dramatically increases for 15 to 16 year old adolescents.¹ When ethnic differences were examined, the study also found that Black adolescents have significantly lower prevalence rate and tend to initiate smoking later than do their white counterparts.¹ Attempting to validate self-report smoking data with biochemical indicators as a comparison standard for adolescents 12 to 14 years old, researchers found that Blacks were more likely than whites to underreport cigarette smoking and tobacco use.² All these findings suggest that without examining some demographic factors, we may not get a full picture of the prevalence of adolescent smoking.

Examining demographic differences can help researchers better understand the phenomenon and develop health-promotion and disease-prevention activities accordingly. Furthermore, if researchers can standardize these demographics, it is likely that results of similar studies can be compared from study to study. The purpose of this research note is to provide readers with the commonly adopted demographic categorizations and their estimates from national sources (e.g., U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

Age

By asking the birth date or the age of respondents, a general category (i.e., children, adolescent, young adult, older adult, and elderly) can be defined as below with the estimated 1991 population in the United States.³

Infants/Preschool (under 5 years)	19.222 million
Children (5-11 years)	25.603 million
Adolescent (youth) (12-17 years)	20.322 million
Young adult (18-24 years)	26.385 million
Older adult (25-64 years)	128.893 million
Elderly (65 years and above)	31.754 million

Race /Ethnicity

According to the current U.S. census classification,⁴ individuals are grouped into four racial/ethnic groups, and their estimates in 1991 are

White	210.899 million
Black	31.164 million
Other, all other individuals	0.113 million
Hispanic origin (of any race)	23.350 million

The "Other" category mainly consists of American Indians, Eskimo (2.117 million), and Asian and Pacific Islanders (7.996 million). The Hispanic origin can be of any race (i.e., White, Black, or Other). Consequently, when the total population is counted, only the population in the White, Black, and Other categories should be included.

Education

Education refers to the number of years of regular schooling the individuals completed as of the date of survey. In 1991, the U.S. population ages 25 and over was categorized as follows⁵

Did not complete high school	21.6%
Completed of 4-year high school	38.6%
Completed of 1-3 years of college	18.4%
Completed 4 or more years of college	21.4%

Income

The best indicator of family income is the poverty-level income. The poverty definition is adopted for official government use by the Office of Management and Budget and consists of a set of monetary income thresholds. The poverty-level income is the ratio of the total family income to the poverty-level threshold for a specified family size, as published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.⁶ For example, the 1992 thresholds were \$7,143 for one person, \$9,137 for a family of two, \$11,186 for a family of three, \$14,335 for a family of four, and up to \$28,745 for a family nine or more. If Family A of four and Family B of four had an income of \$30,000 and \$12,000 respectively, their poverty-level incomes are

Family A

$\$30,000/\$14,335 = 209\%$ poverty level.

Family B

$\$12,000/\$14,335 = 84\%$ poverty level.

Families or individuals with income below their appropriate poverty threshold are classified as below the poverty level. Thus, Family B is considered a poverty family.

In 1992, the number of persons below the official government poverty level increased 1.2 million in the United States. compared to the number in 1991 (see the following)

1992 poverty family = 36.9 million (14.5%)

1991 poverty family = 35.7 million (14.2%)

Urban / Rural

Individuals in the U.S. household population can be divided as residing in urban or rural areas. In 1991, the urban classification includes metropolitan areas with populations of 50,000 or more. Metropolitan areas can also be divided into large (1,000,000 or more) or small (50,000- 999,999) metropolitan areas. The rural classification includes small towns and rural nonfarm and farm areas outside the metropolitan areas with populations below 50,000. The most recent (1991) estimates of urban/rural population are as follows

Urban resident 200.4 million

Rural resident 51.7 million

Geographical Region

Region corresponds to the Census categorization of the coterminous United States into four regions. Their associated states and the total population are listed below:

Northeast (51.1 million) consists of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Midwest (60.7 million) consists of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas.

South (88.1 million) consists of Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas.

West (55.1 million) consists of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Living Arrangement of Persons Under 18 years

This is concerned with the presence of parents in the household of adolescents under 18 years. Adolescents may live with both parents, single parent, other relatives, or other nonrelatives. The 1991 estimates are as follows

Both parents 71.7%

Single parent 25.5%
(single mother 22.4%)
(single father 3.1%)

Other relative 2.2%

Other nonrelatives 0.6%

Marital status

Marital status reported in most national sources reflects the person's status as of the survey date. For instance, the number divorced is a count of persons currently divorced and not yet remarried. It is not the count of all persons who ever divorced in their lifetime or the number of persons who were granted a divorce. The marital status (in percent) of U.S. population over 18 years old for 1970, 1980, and 1990 is listed below." Note, the "Unmarried" consists of "never married", "widowed", and "divorced" categories.

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1970</u>
Married	61.4	65.5	71.7
Unmarried	38.6	34.5	28.3
Never married	22.6	20.3	16.2
Widowed	7.4	8.0	8.9
Divorced	8.6	6.2	3.2

Employment

In 1992, an estimated 117.6 million people 16 years and over, were employed in the civilian labor force, while 9.4 million were unemployed.

Gender

In 1991, it was estimated that males constitute approximately 122.979 million (»48.767%) of the U.S. population and females approximately 129.198 million („51.233%). Before age 30, the male population slightly exceeds the female population (50.98% vs 49.02%), whereas at age 30 and above, the female population overtakes the male population (53.01% vs 46.99%).

Health-Care Coverage

Health-care coverage can be categorized as covered or not covered:⁸

Covered includes private insurance (i.e., nongovernmental sources, Blue Cross and other insurance companies, private industry, etc.) and Medicaid and Medicare.

Not Covered means not covered by private insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, and military plans. In 1992, 17.2% of the population was not covered for persons under 65 years of age.

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