

## Table 2a and 2b - School attendance

*Technical notes updated on 27 October 2008*

Table 2a presents population 5 to 24 years of age by school attendance, sex, age and urban/rural residence for each census between 1985 and 2004. Table 1b presents the respective percentages.

**Description of variables:** Statistics presented in this table are from population censuses. Data obtained from sample surveys are shown for those countries or areas where no census was held during the period. These have been footnoted accordingly. Unless otherwise indicated, data refer to the de facto (present-in-area) population.

School attendance is defined as attendance at any regular educational institution, public or private, for systematic instruction at any level of education at the time of the census or, if the census is taken during the vacation period at the end of the school year, during the last school year. Instruction in particular skills, which is not part of the recognized educational structure of the country (e.g. in-service training courses in factories), is not considered "school attendance" for census purposes.

Age is defined as age at last birthday, that is, the difference between the date of birth and the reference date of the age distribution expressed in completed solar years. The age classification used in this table is single years from 5 to 24 years. Data for some countries or areas deviate from this standard age classification.

The urban/rural classification is that provided by each country or area; it is presumed to be based on the national definitions of urban population that are described in the technical notes for table 6 of the regular issue of the Demographic Yearbook.

**Percentage computation:** Percentage attending school for both sexes, male and female separately is the number of persons attending school by age and sex per 100 persons in the same age-sex group at the same date.

**Reliability of data:** No special reliability codes have been used in connection with this table.

**Limitations:** Statistics on population 5 to 24 years of age by school attendance, sex and age are subject to the same qualifications as have been set forth for population statistics in general in the Technical Notes for the regular issue of the Demographic Yearbook.

Errors in national census data can arise at any stage of the collection, processing or presentation process, and such errors may limit the quality and international comparability of census statistics presented in the Demographic Yearbook. Two major types of errors in census data are often distinguished: first, coverage errors, which lead to the over- or under-enumeration of the population in the census, and second, content errors, which affect the accuracy of the recorded information for the covered population.

Because coverage errors may occur more frequently among some population sub-groups than others, coverage errors may affect not only the absolute number of persons in any given category but also their relative distribution. Levels and patterns of coverage and content errors differ widely among countries and even, at times, from census to census for a specific country. In addition, factors limiting international comparability of census statistics are variations among countries in the concepts, definitions and classifications used in censuses.

An important limitation of school attendance statistics is the variation in the time periods to which the basic census question refers. In many countries or areas, no reference period is specified and attendance seems to refer to the day of the census. It may be noted that the longer the period of reference, the larger is the number of school attendants likely to be reported.

Comparability is also limited by the fact that, in some countries, the question asked at the census refers specifically to attendance at a school which is part of the regular school system while, in others, no such limitation is set, and attendance at commercial schools, dancing schools, language schools, and so forth may be included in the results.

The employment of various minimum ages and age ranges for the cross-classification of school-attending population is another source of non-comparability.

Errors in reporting may include deliberate falsification in countries where non-attendance at school for persons at specified ages is contrary to law or custom.

Because the statistics are classified according to age, they are subject to the limitations with respect to accuracy of age reporting similar to those already discussed in connection with section 3.1.3 of the Technical Notes of the regular issue of the Demographic Yearbook. Possible errors in age-reporting may be especially evident in fluctuations in the single-year frequencies.

The comparability of data by urban/rural residence is affected by the national definitions of urban and rural used in tabulating these data.

**Earlier data:** Population by school attendance, sex and age has been shown previously in issues of the Demographic Yearbook featuring population census statistics as the special topic. This series updates information published in previous issues as indicated in the Index. Data have been presented by urban/rural residence beginning in the 1971 issue.