

Technical notes¹

Table 3 (**Population by age, sex, and urban/rural residence, each census: 1948–1997**) presents population by age, sex and urban/rural residence between 1948 and 1997.

Description of variables: Data in this table either are from population censuses, estimates or are based on sample surveys. Data refer to the de facto population unless otherwise noted.

The reference date of the census or estimate appears in the stub of the table.

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 the following: under 1 year, 1–4 years, 5–year groups through 80–84 years, and 85 years and over and age unknown.

The urban/rural classification of population by age and sex is that provided by each country or area; it is presumed to be based on the national census definitions of urban population that have been set forth at the end of Technical Notes for table 2.

Reliability of data: Estimates which are believed to be less reliable are set in italics rather than in roman type. Classification in terms of reliability is based on the method of construction of the total population estimate as shown in table 3 and discussed in the Technical Notes for that table. No attempt has been made to take account of age-reporting accuracy, the evaluation of which has been described in section 3.1.3 of the Technical Notes.

Limitations: Statistics on population by age and sex are subject to the same qualifications as have been set forth for population statistics in general and age distributions in particular, as discussed in sections 3 and 3.1.3, respectively, of the Technical Notes.

Comparability of population data classified by age and sex is limited in the first place by variations in the definition of total population, discussed in detail in section 3 of the Technical Notes, and by the accuracy of the original enumeration. Both of these factors are more important in relation to certain age groups than to others. For example, under-enumeration is known to be more prevalent among infants and young children

¹ Demographic Yearbook Historical Supplement 1948–1997, United Nations DYB-CD, Sales No.: E/F.99.XIII.12, United Nations Publications New York, Geneva

than among older persons. Similarly, the exclusion from the total population of certain groups which tend to be of selected ages (such as the armed forces) can markedly affect the age structure and its comparability with that for other countries or areas. Consideration should be given to the implications of these basic limitations in using the data.

In addition to these general qualifications are the special problems of comparability which arise in relation to age statistics in particular. Age distributions of population are known to suffer from certain deficiencies which have their origin in irregularities in age reporting. Although some of the irregularities tend to be obscured or eliminated when data are tabulated in five-year age groups rather than by single years, precision still continues to be affected, though the degree of distortion is not always readily seen. [\[20\]](#)

Another factor limiting comparability is the age classification employed by the various countries or areas. Age may be based on the year of birth rather than the age at last birthday, in other words, calculated using the day, month and year of birth. Distributions based on the year of birth only are footnoted when known.

The absence of frequencies in the unknown age group does not necessarily indicate completely accurate reporting and tabulation of the age item. It is often an indication that the unknowns have been eliminated by assigning ages to them before tabulation, or by proportionate distribution after tabulation.

The comparability of data by urban/rural residence is affected by the national definitions of urban and rural used in tabulating these data. When known, the definitions of urban used in national population censuses are presented at the end of table 2. As discussed in detail in the Technical Notes for table 2, these definitions vary considerably from one country or area to another.

Coverage: Population by age and sex is shown for 223 countries or areas.

Earlier data: Population by age, sex and urban/rural residence has been shown in previous issues of the *Demographic Yearbook*. Data included in this table update the series for each available year since 1948 shown in table 3 of the *Historical Supplement*. In addition, the *Population and Vital Statistics Report: 1984 Special Supplement* presents population by age and sex for each census reported during the period 1965 and 1983. For information on additional years covered, readers should consult the Index.

20. For further information, see *Manual IV: Methods of Estimating Basic Demographic Measures from Incomplete Data* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.67.XIII.2).