



Age Stratifier: Guidance on Measuring and Reporting Health Inequalities

Definition

Construct: Age in years

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) uses age in years for measuring and reporting age-related inequality in the population. Age refers to the number of complete years since an individual's date of birth.

Measure: Age categories

CIHI uses age categories determined on an indicator-by-indicator basis. Depending on the population of interest and purpose of reporting, age groupings can range from narrower categories (e.g., single years, 5-year groups) to broader categories (e.g., 15- or 20-year groups).

Variations

- To determine appropriate age categories for your health inequality analysis, consider how health care and social service delivery, eligibility and benefits change as an individual ages (e.g., children move from pediatric to adult services at age 18; drug and eye coverage become universally available in several provinces/territories at age 65).
- CIHI often uses 5-year age categories for analysis and reporting. These categories can be grouped to create larger categories, such as 10- or 15-year groupings, that still maintain the 5-year category boundaries. A common approach is to let your data guide how best to categorize age. For example, if 5-year age groups are not showing variation in inequalities, try rolling up to 10-year age groupings.

Key considerations

- Consider whether **age stratification** or **age standardization** is appropriate.
- **Age stratification** is often carried out to identify and report on age-related inequalities.
- CIHI uses **age standardization** to compare indicator results across different populations and over time (see *Measuring Health Inequalities: A Toolkit* — [Calculating Stratified Rates and Inequality Measures: Methodology and Code in SAS and R](#)). For age-standardized indicators, CIHI uses 5-year intervals.¹





How can I access age data?

Age in years is available in all CIHI's databases. For pediatric reporting, age units are sometimes available in months (for patients between the ages of 1 month and 2 years) or days (for patients younger than 31 days).

CIHI's [Equity Stratifier Inventory](#) is periodically updated with a complete list of the stratifier information available in CIHI databases, as well as certain Statistics Canada databases.

Statistics Canada's standards

[Age of person](#), May 22, 2007, to current

Related resources

Visit the [Equity stratifiers page](#) for guidance on additional stratifiers.

Version history

June 2022	Updated text and format for information sheet.
April 2018	Initial definition released as part of In Pursuit of Health Equity: Defining Stratifiers for Measuring Health Inequality (PDF) .

Reference

1. Canadian Institute for Health Information. [Indicator Library: General Methodology Notes — Clinical Indicators](#). 2021.

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