

Global - Age Standardization Rates: A New WHO Standard

World Health Organization - United Nations

Report generated on: June 21, 2016

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Overview

Identification

ID NUMBER

glob-cgfr-whostd-2001-v01

Version

VERSION DESCRIPTION

PRODUCTION DATE

2001

Overview

ABSTRACT

A recent WHO analysis has revealed the need for a new world standard population (this new standard table is the dataset referenced with this ddi). This has become particularly pertinent given the rapid and continued declines in age-specific mortality rates among the oldest old, and the increasing availability of epidemiological data for higher age groups. There is clearly no conceptual justification for choosing one standard over another, hence the choice is arbitrary. However, choosing a standard population with higher proportions in the younger age groups tends to weight events at these ages disproportionately. Similarly, choosing an older standard does the opposite. Hence, rather than selecting a standard to match the current age-structure of some population(s), the WHO adopted a standard based on the average age-structure of those populations to be compared (the world) over the likely period of time that a new standard will be used (some 25-30 years), using the latest UN assessment for 1998 (UN Population Division, 1998). From these estimates, an average world population age-structure was constructed for the period 2000-2025. The use of an average world population, as well as a time series of observations, removes the effects of historical events such as wars and famine on population age composition. The terminal age group in the new WHO standard population has been extended out to 100 years and over, rather than the 85 and over as is the current practice. The WHO World Standard population has fewer children and notably more adults aged 70 and above than the world standard. It is also notably younger than the European standard.

It is important to note, however, that the age standardized death rates based on the new standard are not comparable to previous estimates that are based on some earlier standard(s). However, to facilitate comparative analyses, WHO will disseminate trend analyses of the "complete" historical mortality data using on the new WHO World Standard Population in future editions of the World Health Statistics Annual.

Producers and Sponsors

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR(S)

Name	Affiliation
World Health Organization	United Nations

FUNDING

Name	Abbreviation	Role
World Health Organization	WHO	

Metadata Production

METADATA PRODUCED BY

Name	Abbreviation	Affiliation	Role
Centre for Global Health Research	CGHR	St. Michael's Hospital; University of Toronto	Metadata Producer

DDI DOCUMENT VERSION

Version 1.0. This is the very first version of this DDI document

DDI DOCUMENT ID

glob-cgchr-whostd-2001-v01

Sampling

No content available

Questionnaires

No content available

Data Collection

Data Collection Dates

Start	End	Cycle
2001	2001	N/A

Data Collection Mode

Face-to-face [f2f]

Data Processing

No content available

Data Appraisal

No content available