DEFINITION OF THE INDICATORS OF POPULATION AGEING

A. POPULATION

Population refers to the de facto population in a country, area or region as of 1 July of the year indicated. Figures are presented in thousands.

B. PROPORTION AT OLDER AGES

Proportion at older ages is the population 60 years or over, 65 years or over, or 80 years or over as a proportion of the total population.

C. PROPORTION AT OLDER AGES BY URBAN/RURAL

Proportion at older ages by urban/rural is the proportion of the population 60 years or over by urban/rural residence.

D. GROWTH RATE

A population’s growth rate is the increase (or decrease) in the number of persons in the population during a certain period of time, expressed as a percentage of the population at the beginning of the time period. The average annual growth rates for all ages as well as for particular age groups are calculated on the assumption that growth is continuous.

E. MEDIAN AGE

The median age of a population is the age that divides the population into two groups of the same size, such that half of the total population is younger than that age and the other half older.

F. OLD-AGE SUPPORT RATIO

The old-age support ratio (or potential support ratio) is the number of persons aged 15 to 64 years per every person aged 65 years or over.

G. DEPENDENCY RATIO

The total dependency ratio is the number of persons under age 15 years plus persons aged 65 years or over per 100 persons aged 15 to 64 years. It is the sum of the child dependency ratio and the old-age dependency ratio.

H. SEX RATIO

The sex ratio is calculated as the number of males per 100 females in a population. The sex ratio may be calculated for a total population or for a specific age group.

I. LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy at a specific age is the average number of additional years a person of that age could expect to live if current mortality levels observed for ages above that age were to continue for the rest of that person’s life. In particular, life expectancy at birth is the average number of years a newborn would live if current age-specific mortality rates were to continue.
J. LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The labour force participation rate consists of the economically active population in a particular age group as a percentage of the total population of that same age group. The active population (or labour force) includes persons in paid or unpaid employment, members of the armed forces (including temporary members) and the unemployed (including first-time job-seekers.). This definition was adopted by the Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1982). National definitions may differ in some cases. For information on the differences in scope, definitions and methods of calculation used for the various national series, see International Labour Organization, Sources and Methods: Labour Statistics (formerly Statistical Sources and Methods), Volume 5: Total and Economically Active Population, Employment and Unemployment (Population Censuses), available from http://laborsta.ilo.org/applv8/data/SSM5/E/ssm5.html#.E.

K. STATUTORY RETIREMENT AGE

The statutory retirement age is the age at which eligible individuals qualify to receive full benefits upon retirement in accordance to national laws and regulations. In addition to attainment of a specified age, receiving retirement benefits can also be conditional on the completion of a specified period of contributions or covered employment.

L. PROPORTION MARRIED

The proportion married among older persons is the proportion of persons aged 60 years or over who are either married or in a union.

M. PROPORTION LIVING INDEPENDENTLY

The proportion of older persons living independently is the proportion of persons aged 60 years or over who live alone or with their spouse only.
SOURCES AND METHODS

Data on demographic trends used in the profiles of ageing are taken from the 2012 Revision of the official United Nations world population estimates and projections (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2013a). In addition, data by urban/rural residence were obtained from United Nations, Department of Economic Affairs, Population Division (2013b), data on labour force participation from the International Labour Organization (2011) and data on statutory retirement age from the United States Social Security Administration (2013). Data on living arrangements and marital status were compiled from United Nations (2012).

The population estimates and projections, which are prepared biennially by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, provide the standard and consistent set of population figures that are used throughout the United Nations system as the basis for activities requiring population information. In the 2012 Revision of the World Population Prospects, standard demographic techniques were used to estimate the population by age and sex, as well as trends in total fertility, life expectancy at birth, infant mortality and international migration for the years 1950 through 2010, from data available from censuses and post-enumeration surveys; demographic and health surveys; population and vital registration systems; scientific reports and data collections; and from data and estimates provided by international agencies. The resulting estimates provided the basis from which the population projections follow. In the 2012 Revision, the population projections are based on a probabilistic (Bayesian) method for projecting total fertility and life expectancy at birth. This method is based on empirical fertility and mortality trends estimated for all countries of the world for the period 1950 to 2010. The profiles of ageing draw on the medium variant population projections through the year 2050.1

References


1 The methodology and data sources underlying the population estimates and projections can be found on the United Nations Population Division’s website at http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm.