

Statistical standard for access to telecommunications systems

Rationale

As the range of households' access to telecommunication systems has greatly increased in recent years this standard has been developed to ensure that collections of this data will be consistent across surveys and across time.

Definition

Access to telecommunication systems

Access to telecommunication systems is the ability of residents in a private dwelling to communicate, via telephone, fax and/or the Internet, with people outside the dwelling and to use services provided through these media. This requires the machine to be in working order and for there to be a working connection.

Accessible telephones

Accessible telephones include those with fixed connections, cordless telephones, and some cell phones. A cell phone is counted as accessible if it is predominantly located in a private dwelling when household members are at home. For a fuller explanation of the distinction between an accessible and a non-accessible cell phone see the section on operational issues below. Also included as accessible telephones are those that have been modified with Braille buttons, hearing aid attachments or with other devices to assist use by people with disabilities.

Accessible fax machines

Accessible fax or facsimile machines include those which are stand alone fax machines; those connected to another machine such as a telephone answering machine or mobile phone; a fax enabled computer.

Access to the Internet

Internet access includes access to the Internet with or without access to the World Wide Web.

Operational issues

Accessible cell phones

Statistics New Zealand questions on access to telephones have, historically, been asked at the private dwelling or household level rather than of individuals. The advent of mobile cell phones has required a distinction to be drawn between cell phones which are, in general, accessible to household members and should, therefore, be counted in surveys and censuses, and those which are not generally accessible.

For example, imagine a two person household, a man and a woman, with one cell phone and no other telephone. They both work outside the home, the man taking the cell phone to and from work with him. Generally, they work the same hours and are at home at the same time. So, the cell phone is usually available for each household member to use when they are both at home and, for the purposes of this standard, it should be counted as an accessible telephone.

However, if the woman works at home and the cell phone is taken by the man to his place of work, the woman does not have access to a telephone, from within the dwelling, for a considerable part of the day. Therefore, for the purposes of this standard, the cell phone should not be counted as an accessible telephone.

Respondents are instructed to "count a cell phone that is here all or most of the time". It is unlikely that a household's first choice of access to a telephone will be by cell phone, ie it is unlikely to be their only or main form of telephone access.

Access to telecommunication systems outside of the dwelling

The purpose of this standard is to record respondents' access to telecommunication systems from within their own private dwellings. There will be cases where a respondent will not have access from their own home but will be able to use a neighbour's telephone, fax and/or Internet connection, or will have access at work, or through a system which is available to the public generally, eg a public telephone. Under this standard these means of access, outside of the respondent's own dwelling, should not be counted as accessible.

Explanatory notes

This standard has been developed in response to the technological changes that have taken place in telecommunications in NZ society and to support the 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings obtaining information on access to telecommunication systems. It replaces the Statistical Standard for Access to a Telephone and is designed to gather information about a wider range of communication systems than was possible under that standard. A comparison of the classifications access to a telephone and access to telecommunications systems is included in the Related classifications and standards section.

As further rapid changes are expected in the technology of telecommunication systems, in the near future, this standard has not attempted to define access in terms of the technology that is being used. Data collected at one time will include the use of various levels of technological advancement and hence various levels of access to flow-on services. For example, telephone banking requires use of a touch-tone phone but information collected, using this standard, does not distinguish between touch-tone and dial telephones. Similarly, although Internet services can be accessed via a personal computer or through a television set with a modem and processor plug, this standard is designed to record the Internet access rather than the method of access.

Classification criteria

The criterion used to classify a private dwelling is whether or not it contains access to telephone, fax and/or Internet services in working order.

Classification

Access to telecommunication systems is a flat classification with four categories – excluding residual categories.

The residual categories are defined in the Glossary.

Classification	Access to Telecommunications System – Standard Classification
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Abbreviation	TELEACC
Version	V1.0
Effective date	09/12/1998

Coding process

Up to three answers should be coded.

Where telephone and/or fax and/or Internet access has been answered positively the 'no access' answer may not also be coded. In this case the 'no access' category should not be captured.

Where tick boxes are used coding will not be necessary except for responses that fall into one of the residual categories.

Questionnaire Module

Requirements

- The questionnaire module or guide notes must stipulate that the telephone, fax or Internet equipment should be in working order, and that any connections to service providers, required to ensure access, should be in operation.
- Internet is a proper noun and should be spelt with a capital 'I'.
- Respondents should be given some guidance about when to count cell phones.
- Collecting this information via telephone interviews is inappropriate as only residents in private dwellings with telephones could be respondents.

Example

The questionnaire module below is an example that meets the requirements documented in this statistical standard. Other questionnaire modules may vary in format but should conform to the requirements contained in this statistical standard.

16 Mark as many spaces as you need to show which of these is available here in this dwelling.

DON'T count anything that is disconnected or broken.

- a telephone (or a cell phone that is here all or most of the time)
- fax access
- Internet access
- none of these

Standard output

Access to telecommunication systems

The standard output variable categories are the same as the classification categories. The residual categories may be output separately or combined. Where a combination item of residuals is to be used in output, this item should be labelled 'not elsewhere included' and should have a footnote indicating its composition. 'repeated value' should not be used in any official output.

Additional standard outputs may be established if experience shows that, besides access to individual systems, it is desirable to output combinations of access.

The residual categories are defined in the glossary.

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

Access to telephone

The classification access to a telephone is less comprehensive than the classification contained in this standard. It has three categories:

- 1 Telephone access
- 2 No telephone access
- 9 Not specified

The category 'telephone access' is equivalent to the 'access to a telephone' category, of the new access to telecommunications systems standard.

An equivalent to the above category 'no telephone access' can be derived from the new standard when the question has been answered (ie it is not a refusal or other non-response) and 'access to a telephone' has not been positively indicated.

The access to a telephone category 'no telephone access' is not equivalent to the access to telecommunications systems category 'no access to telecommunication systems' because telephone access is only one component of telecommunication access.

Other

The access to telecommunications systems standard is not used in any other part of the official statistical system in New Zealand.

International

This standard is not based on any international standard or the standard of any other country.

Glossary

Cell phone

A small, portable radio-telephone having access to a cellular radio system.

Cordless telephone

A telephone, not attached to a jack point, with a range of up to 100 metres.

Fax or facsimile

The production of an exact copy of a document, etc by electronic scanning and transmission of the resulting data. A machine for transmitting or receiving these. A message sent or received in this way.

Internet

An international computer network linking computers from educational institutions, government agencies, industries and individuals, etc.

Residual categories

Don't know

Use of this category is discretionary. The use of a category capturing don't know responses is most applicable to household surveys where don't know may be a legitimate response to certain questions.

Refused to answer

This category is only used when it is known that the respondent has purposefully chosen not to respond to the question. Use of this residual category in processing is optional. Its use is most applicable in face-to-face or telephone interviews, but may be used in self-completed questionnaires if the respondent has clearly indicated they refuse or object to answering the question.

Repeated value

Use of this category is discretionary. It is only used for questions that allow multiple responses. It is used when a respondent has given two responses that have the same code. This may be two written responses, or one tick box response and one written response. For example, someone may tick the English language tick box response option and also write 'English' in the blank space.

Response unidentifiable

This category is used when there is a response given, but:

1. the response is illegible, or
2. it is unclear what the meaning or intent of the response is – this most commonly occurs when the response being classified contains insufficient detail, is ambiguous or is vague, or
3. the response is contradictory eg, both the yes and no tick boxes have been ticked, or
4. the response is clear and seemingly within the scope of the classification but can not be coded because no suitable option (particularly other residual category options such as 'not elsewhere classified' or 'not further defined') exists in the classification or codefile.

Response outside scope

This category is used for responses that are positively identified (ie the meaning and the intent are clear) but which clearly fall outside the scope of the classification/topic as defined in the standard.

Not stated

This category is only used where a respondent has not given any response to the question asked, ie it is solely for non-response.