

Statistical standard for child dependency status

Rationale

Child dependency is an important variable in determining the composition of families and households. Census and many other surveys (e.g. Household Labour Force Survey, New Zealand Income Survey, and Household Economic Survey) use the child dependency classifications to derive information about dependent and non-dependent children.

Three classifications are included in the scope of this standard:

- dependent child under 18 indicator classification
- dependent young person indicator classification
- child dependency status classification

Definition

All three classifications are derived variables.

Child dependency status is a modular derived variable that identifies the combination of child types in a family nucleus or household. 'Modular' means that it is not a stand-alone classification – it must always be combined with other variables to create output classifications. It cannot be used on its own because it does not define the frame (eg family or household) for the categories. It can be applied (embedded or nested) to the standard classifications of:

- family type
- household composition

The 'dependent child under 18 indicator' and 'dependent young person indicator' classifications are also derived. These identify the dependency status of individuals who are children in a family nucleus. 'Indicator' means that the classification should be applied to individuals. The 'dependent child under 18 indicator' indicates whether an individual is a 'dependent child under 18', a 'dependent young person or non-dependent child', or a 'child of unknown dependency status'. Similarly, the 'dependent young person indicator' indicates whether an individual is a 'dependent young person', a 'dependent child under 18 or a non-dependent child', or a 'child of unknown dependency status'.

Both indicator classifications can be used stand-alone or applied to the standard classifications of:

- family type
- household composition

A number of useful definitions can be found in the glossary section of this standard.

Operational Issues

In some surveys (eg census), information on work and labour force status is not available for individuals who are absent on survey night. This affects all people who are absentee children in a family nucleus and who are aged 15–24. Those individuals will be classified as 'children of unknown dependency status'.

The concept of child dependency was extended in 2008 to encompass individuals aged 18–24 who were children in a family nucleus and not working full time. These individuals are referred to as 'dependent young persons' in the new classification. The previous definition of a dependent child included only children in a family nucleus aged under 18 who were not employed full time. The age range was broadened to capture the increasing numbers of individuals who continue to reside with their parents beyond the age of 18 because of participation in study, increased costs of living, and many other reasons.

Explanatory notes

A number of flexible options exist for the use of these classifications. These are detailed in the 'Standard output' section of the 'Standard' tab and users of the standard and classifications are advised to familiarise themselves with the various options.

Classification criteria

For the indicator classifications, the criteria for inclusion in a specific category is age, role in family nucleus, and work and labour force status. Further, some surveys may wish to restrict their subject population to those individuals in a family type of 'couple with children' or 'one parent with children'.

For the 'child dependency status classification', the criteria for each level is:

Level 1: Whether or not the family or household has at least one identified 'dependent child under 18'

Level 2: The specific combination of children that the family or household contains – that is, combinations of dependent child(ren) under 18, dependent young persons, non-dependent children, and children whose dependency status is unknown.

Level 3: Specific combination of children that the family or household contains, with more detailed options for families or households with children of unknown dependency.

Classification

The 'Dependent child under 18 indicator' and 'Dependent young person indicator' classifications are flat classifications each with three categories.

The standard classification of child dependency status is a hierarchical classification of four levels. Level 1 of the classification has two categories, level 2 has nine categories, and level 3 has 15 categories.

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Classification | Child Dependency Status Standard Classification 2008 - Master Version |
| Abbreviation | DEPCHILD08.MAST |
| Version | V1.0 |
| Effective date | 29/08/2008 |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Classification | Child Dependency Status Standard Classification 2008 - Alternate Version |
| Abbreviation | DEPCHILD08.ALT1 |
| Version | V1.0 |
| Effective date | 29/08/2008 |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Classification | Dependent Child Under 18 Indicator Classification |
| Abbreviation | DEPCHU18IN |
| Version | V1.0 |
| Effective date | 29/08/2008 |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Classification | Dependent Young Person Indicator Classification |
| Abbreviation | DEPYOUNGPIN |
| Version | V1.0 |
| Effective date | 29/08/2008 |

Coding process

Child dependency status is a derived variable and is derived from the following classifications:

- age
- role in family nucleus
- work and labour force status, **or**
labour force status in combination with hours worked.

Some surveys choose to restrict the subject population to those individuals in a family type of 'couple

with children' or 'one parent with children' in order to further ensure the target population is captured.

Questionnaire module

As a question on child dependency is not asked directly, please refer to the standards for age or labour force status to see examples of questionnaire modules that can be used.

Standard output

Child Dependency

The indicator classifications can be output on their own or embedded into the family type or household composition classifications. The child dependency status classification must be embedded into another classification, usually family type or household composition. It cannot be output on its own.

The survey area may wish to output information about dependent young persons who are engaged in study. This can be done by cross-tabulating information from the 'dependent young person indicator' with information about participation in study (using a classification such as CEN.STUDY – census study classification). This cross-tabulation will provide information about individuals in terms of their dependency and participation in study.

One purpose of the survey may be to output information about those dependent children and dependent young persons who are not currently receiving a benefit. This may be done provided the survey collects information about sources of income. The sources of income classification may be cross-tabulated with the indicator classification(s), providing a measure of dependent children and dependent young persons that are not receiving a benefit.

The 'child dependency status' classification is designed to be flexible. Survey areas may use level 1 of the classification, or may aggregate certain combinations of categories at level 2 as required. To learn more about the flexibility of this classification, and what can be done to meet your needs, contact Classifications and Standards.

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

The 'child dependency status classification', 'dependent child under 18 indicator classification', and 'dependent young person indicator classification' can all be applied (embedded or nested) to the standard classifications of:

- family type
- household composition

When the child dependency status classification is nested into the family type classification, the 'family type by child dependency status' classification can be used.

Similarly, when the child dependency status classification is nested into the household composition classification, the 'household composition by child dependency status' classification can be used.

Glossary

Adult child

An adult child is a 'child in a family nucleus' who is employed full time or who is aged 18 years or over. (This group is made up of all dependent young persons and all non-dependent children.)

Child(ren) in a family nucleus

To be a 'child in a family nucleus', a person must have usual residence with at least one parent, and have no partner or child(ren) of their own living in the same household. Note that 'child(ren) in a family nucleus' can be any age.

For the purposes of the standard classifications of child dependency, 'child(ren) in a family nucleus' can be divided into four groups: dependent child(ren), dependent young persons, non-dependent children, and children of unknown dependency status.

Dependent child(ren) and young person(s)

A child (birth, biological, adopted, step- or other) in a family nucleus who is aged under 15 years, or

who is aged 15–24 years of age and not employed full time.

Dependent child(ren) under 18

A child (birth/biological, adopted, step- or other) in a family nucleus who is aged under 15 years, or who is aged 15–17 and not employed full time.

Dependent young person

A child (birth/biological, adopted, step- or other) in a family nucleus who is aged 18–24 years and is not employed full time.

Employed full-time

People who are employed full time usually work thirty or more hours per week.

Non-dependent child(ren)

A child (birth/biological, adopted, step- or other) in a family nucleus who is either aged 15–24 years and employed full time, or is aged 25 years or older.

Parent

The mother, father (birth/biological, adopted, or step-), or 'person in a parent role' of a 'child in a family nucleus'. A 'person in a parent role' is a person who is not a mother or father (birth/biological, adopted or step-) of the child, but who nevertheless usually resides with that child. The child does not have a partner or child of their own and does not usually reside with their mother or father (birth/biological, adopted or step-). A person in a parent role can be considered a parent according to current social norms regarding parenting. The specific criteria as to who is included or excluded from being a 'person in a parent role' should be defined by the survey.

Usual residence

Usual residence is the address of the dwelling where a person considers himself or herself to usually reside, except in the specific cases listed in the guidelines. See the standard for usual residence.

References

Statistics NZ (1999). Child Dependency Status Classification.

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/statistical-methods/classifications-and-related-statistical-standards/child-dependency-status/default.htm> Statistics NZ, Wellington.