

Statistical standard for living arrangements

Rationale

Living arrangements is a key variable for deriving complex household and family data.

Definition

Living arrangements is a variable that collects the familial and non-familial relationships of a person to all the other people with whom they usually reside.

The following supporting concepts are defined in the Glossary:

- familial relationship
- non-familial relationship
- usual residence.

Operational issues

There are three constraints on the definition of living arrangements. Firstly, some people do not want to report their true relationships to the people they usually live with. This could be because they find it an invasion of their privacy in general, or there might be a particular relationship they do not want known. For example, a beneficiary may not want to report that they are living with a partner.

A second constraint is that living arrangements can be mis-reported unintentionally. Respondents can get confused answering the questionnaire module and reverse their relationships to people in the household. For example, an aunt who is filling out the questionnaire module for living arrangements may accidentally report living with her auntie instead of niece. Reversed relationships can sometimes be corrected by checking other information provided by the respondent.

Finally, respondents can accidentally omit some of the people with whom they usually reside. For example, a grandmother may report living with a daughter, but overlook reporting the grandchild she also lives with.

Explanatory notes

Living arrangements coverage

The statistical unit for which living arrangements is an attribute is always a person. Surveys can collect living arrangements data for any subpopulation. However, surveys need to carefully define for users of the data which people are included and excluded from the collection of the variable.

Relationship vs living arrangements

The classification for living arrangements has a similar code structure to relationship to reference person. The concept differs from relationship in that living arrangements collects information about the relationship each person has to the people with whom they usually reside. In contrast, relationship collects information on the relationship of each person in a defined group to one person.

Related vs unrelated people

The definitions of related and unrelated people, as well as familial and non-familial relationships are given in the Glossary. In summary, related people are people who have familial relationships (related by blood, registered marriage, consensual union, fostering or adoption), and unrelated people have a non-familial relationship. In practice, related people are people that are reported as related and living with a relative. Two examples illustrate the difficulties in classifying related and unrelated people.

A respondent may report that they are living with their "ex-husband's cousin". The respondent may feel that their ex-husband's cousin is related to them and is part of their family. However, since there is no familial relationship between the respondent and their ex-husband's cousin, they are unrelated people according to the classification.

In another case, a respondent may report living with their "second cousin once removed". The respondent may feel that this is a very distant relationship and does not constitute a relative, but the classification would categorise "second cousin once removed" as a related person, since there is a blood relationship.

In both cases, the respondents may simply write "cousin", and this would be classified as such in the classification. However, the above examples show the ambiguities that exist in the concepts of related and unrelated people.

Changes since the 1995 review of the standard

The previous version of the living arrangements standard contained a flat classification with 40 categories. The structure of the classification has been changed to a hierarchical one with three levels. This will enable different surveys to utilise the classification in varying amounts of detail.

Classification criteria

Living arrangements is a hierarchical classification with three levels. At level 1, usual residence with close familial relatives (living with spouse/partner, child and parent) is the criterion for classification. This is because spouse/partner, parent, and child living arrangements are needed to identify different types of households and families (see the classification and related statistical standards for family type and household composition). All other living arrangements are aggregated at level 1 to three broad categories: other relative; non-relative; and guest/visitor/inmate/patient/ resident.

At level 2 of the classification all familial relationships are listed, including close familial relationships (spouse, child, parent) and other familial relationships (sibling, grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin). Of the non-familial relationships, only living with flatmate is given at level 2. This is because flatmate is a frequent response to the living arrangements question. It helps identify, for example, 'households of unrelated people' (see the statistical standard for household composition). All other non-familial relationships are aggregated at level 2 under 'other non-relative'.

Level 3 of the classification classifies familial relationships in greater detail, for example, by categories that provide generational information such as 'great' (eg great-grandparent) categories. Non-familial relationships are given in full detail at

Standard output

Living arrangements is an input variable and is used for deriving data on complex households and families. (See the Related classifications and standards section)

Living arrangements should not be used as an output; there are no standard outputs for living arrangements.

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

Living arrangements can be used as an input variable to derive the following statistical standards:

- family type
- household composition
- marital status

Living arrangements can also be used to help derive the following standard classifications:

- child dependency status
- type of couple
- age of youngest child
- sex of sole parent
- number of children

Other related standards:

- relationship

International

There are no international links with this standard.

Glossary

Consensual union

Two people usually resident in the same dwelling who:

- share mutual concern for each other
- have a degree of economic, social and emotional interdependence
- consider their relationship to be akin to marriage.

Dwelling

Any building or structure, or part thereof, that is used (or intended to be used) for the purpose of human habitation. It can be of a permanent, temporary or even mobile nature and includes structures such as motels, hotels, hospitals, prisons, motor homes, huts, and tents.

At the highest level, dwellings are classified as private or non-private. A private dwelling accommodates a person or a group of people, but is not available to the public. Included are: houses, flats and apartments; residences attached to a business or institution; baches, cribs and huts; garages; caravans, cabins and tents; vehicles; vessels; or dwellings of the above types that are under construction.

All other dwellings are non-private and are available to the public. They may be available for use generally, or by virtue of occupation or study, special need, or legal requirement. Such dwellings may have facilities (such as a dining room) that are for shared use. These dwellings include: hotels and motels; guest houses and boarding houses; hostels; public and private hospitals; homes for the elderly; educational, welfare, religious and charitable institutions; prisons and penal institutions; defence establishments; work camps, staff quarters and seasonal quarters; motor camps; and other communal dwellings. If this type of accommodation includes units that are designed for the exclusive use (temporarily) of one or more people, the units are considered to be part of the non-private dwelling and not separate non-private dwellings. Private residences that are attached to non-private dwellings are, however, considered to be separate private dwellings.

Familial relationship

A relationship in which a person is related to another person by blood, registered marriage, consensual union, fostering or adoption.

Household

One person who usually resides alone or two or more people who usually reside together and share facilities (such as eating facilities, cooking facilities, bathroom and toilet facilities, a living area).

Non-familial relationship

A relationship in which a person is not related to another person by blood, registered marriage, consensual union, fostering or adoption.

Relationship (to reference person)

The variable that collects the relationship(s) of any one person to all the other people in a group of people. See the statistical standard for relationship.

Registered marriage

A marriage for which a marriage certificate has been signed legalising the marriage of two people. People who are legally married have signed a marriage certificate that is valid at the time of the survey.

Related people

People who have a familial relationship.

Unrelated people

People who have a non-familial relationship.

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 below.

1. People who board at another residence to attend primary or secondary school, and return to their parent's(s') or guardian's(s') home for the holidays, usually reside at the address of their parent(s) or guardian(s). Post-secondary students usually reside at the address where they live while studying.

2. Children in joint custody usually reside at the place where they spend more nights, or if they spend equal amounts of time at each residence, they usually reside at the place where they are at the time of the survey.
3. People who are in rest homes, hospitals, prisons or other institutions, usually reside where they consider themselves to live, and this may include the institution.
4. A person whose home is on any ship, boat or vessel permanently located in any harbour shall be deemed to usually reside at the wharf or landing place (or main wharf or landing place) of the harbour.
5. A person from another country who has lived, or intends to live, in New Zealand for 12 months or more usually resides at his or her address in New Zealand (as in external migration).
6. People of no fixed abode have no usual residence.
7. People who spend equal amounts of time residing at different addresses, and can not decide which address is their usual residence, usually reside at the address they were surveyed at.
8. If none of the above guidelines apply, the person usually resides at the address he or she was surveyed at.

Visitor

A person who is present in a dwelling at the time of the survey but does not usually reside in that dwelling.

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.

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.

References

Statistics New Zealand (1995). *New Zealand Standard Classification of Households and Families* , Wellington.

Statistics New Zealand (1999). *Statistical Standard for Relationship to Reference Person* , Wellington.