

COLLECTING EQUALITY INFORMATION
GUIDANCE ON ASKING QUESTIONS ON:

AGE



one
scotland
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Introduction: Why it is necessary to collect information about age

“Poor measurement and a lack of transparency have contributed to society and governments being unable to tackle persistent inequalities and their causes. The data available on inequality are utterly inadequate in many ways, limiting people’s ability to understand problems and their causes, set priorities and track progress. And even where data do exist, they are not consistently used well or published in a way that makes sense.”

This was one of the conclusions of *Fairness and Freedom, The Final Report of the Equalities Review* in 2007. This was followed by a report from the Office of National Statistics which identified eight principles for collection and dissemination of equality data. Principle 4 states that:

“Consistency of methods, concepts and classifications is fundamental in the collection, analysis and presentation of equality statistics.”

In order to promote more consistency the Scottish Government has been working on providing harmonised questions for use in surveys in Scotland.

There are six equality strands: age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion/belief. This guidance note provides a harmonized question for collecting information on **age**.

Recommended question

What was your age last birthday?

If more detail is required then the recommended question for collecting date of birth is:

What is your date of birth?

The question should be addressed directly to the respondent. Where the respondent is unable to provide an answer, for example they are unable to use a computer, then another member of the household can be asked to give a response on their behalf. This should only be allowed as a last resort and the interviewer should record that a proxy response was given. It is very important the interviewers do not attempt to provide an answer on behalf of the respondent.

There is no recommended or harmonised approach to collecting age information through administrative data collections.



Analysis and presentation of results

Data should be analysed and presented in a way that is most useful to users of the data, with consideration of what kind of analysis would be most likely to reveal any inequalities that require action. This will depend on which subject area the data relate to and there are no harmonised age bands or categories.

Where age is unknown the data should either be presented as 'unknown' or 'missing' or if missing values are unacceptable for your analysis it may be worth imputing the missing values.

The phrases 'pensionable age' and 'pensionable adults' should not be used as people increasingly work beyond the ages of 60 and 65 years and consequently these terms have lost their relevance. For the same reason the terms 'working age' and 'working age adults' should be avoided. The term 'child' or 'school age' may mean different things to different people so may not be the clearest way to present data. It is recommended that data are presented with age group labels that are unambiguous, such as 'age 65 years and over'.

Statistical disclosure issues should always be considered when publishing data.

Contact us

This document has been provided to help people collect information on age in Scotland. We welcome any comments you have on this guidance note especially any relating to the practical application of the guidance. It will be revised and updated when necessary.

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Useful links

Equalities Review:

<http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/equalitiesreview/publications.html>

Statistical Code of Practice and Disclosure Control:

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about_ns/cop/
http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about_ns/cop/downloads/prot_data_access_confidentiality.pdf

ONS Report from the review of equality data:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/measuring-equality/equality-data-review/review-of-equality-data--final-report.pdf>