



Age reporting in South African datasets

A Study of the quality of age reporting in selected South African Household-based Surveys, from 2000 – 2014

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BACKGROUND:

Age heaping describes the phenomenon of uneven population age distribution in Census or survey data. When age heaping occurs, data show systematic spikes on particular ages such as those ending in 0 or 5.

Data on age in developing countries are subject to errors, particularly in circumstances where literacy levels are not high. This study measured:

1. The accuracy of age reporting in South-African datasets, looking at the:
 - Labour Force Survey (2000 – 2007)
 - Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2008 – 2014)
 - General Household Survey (2002 – 2013)Using the Whipple Index and Myers Blended index;
2. The impact of age imputation on the accuracy of age reporting;
3. The impact of the appointment of Permanent field staff on the accuracy of age reporting;
4. The impact of the household record card, which was introduced to the QLFS in Quarter 1 (January -March) 2010 on the accuracy of age reporting.
5. The impact of Proxy Respondents on the accuracy of age reporting.

RESULTS:

The quality of age reporting in South Africa is very accurate. The appointment of permanent field staff improved the quality of age reporting. The household record card made no significant difference regarding the quality of age reporting. The difference between self-reported ages, and ages reported by proxy persons is insignificant.

Keywords: Age heaping; Whipple Index; Myers Blended index; Age imputation.