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Institute for Statistics

## **SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

### **METADATA**

**Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes**

**4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)**

#### **Definition**

Percentage of a cohort of children or young people aged 3-5 years above the intended age for the last grade of each level of education who have completed that grade.

The *intended age for the last grade* of each level of education is the age at which pupils would enter the grade if they had started school at the official primary entrance age, had studied full-time and had progressed without repeating or skipping a grade.

For example, if the official age of entry into primary education is 6 years, and if primary education has 6 grades, the intended age for the last grade of primary education is 11 years. In this case, 14-16 years ( $11 + 3 = 14$  and  $11 + 5 = 16$ ) would be the reference age group for calculation of the primary completion rate.

#### **Purpose**

The completion rate indicates how many persons in a given age group have completed the relevant level of education. By choosing an age-group which is slightly older than the theoretical age group for completing each level of education, the indicator measures how many children and adolescents enter school more or less on time and progress through the education system without excessive delays.

#### **Calculation method**

The number of persons in the relevant age group who have completed the last grade of the given level of education is expressed as a percentage of the total population (in the survey sample) of the same age group. As with attendance rates, individuals are assigned completion age group based on actual or assumed age at the beginning of the school year.

$$CR_n = \frac{EAP_{n,AG(a+3t5)}}{PAG_{(a+3t5)}}$$

where:

$CR_n$  = completion rate for level  $n$  of education

$EAP_{n,AG(a+3t5)}$  = population aged 3 to 5 years above the official entrance age  $a$  into the last grade of level  $n$  of education who completed level  $n$

$PAG_{(a+3t5)}$  = population aged 3 to 5 years above the official entrance age  $a$  into the last grade of level  $n$  of education

### **Interpretation**

A completion rate at or near 100% indicates that most or all children and adolescents have completed a level of education by the time they are 3 to 5 years older than the official age of entry into the last grade of the given level of education.

A low completion rate indicates low or delayed entry into a given level of education, high drop-out, high repetition, late completion, or a combination of these factors.

To identify the causes of low completion rates, it is necessary to examine other indicators, for example the out-of-school rate, the gross intake ratio to the last grade, and the percentage of over-age children.

When disaggregated by sex, location and other characteristics, this indicator can identify excluded population groups.

### **Type of data source**

Population censuses, household surveys.

### **Disaggregation**

Data from household surveys are usually disaggregated by sex, location and household wealth (socio-economic status) quintile. The location (urban or rural) is defined according to national standards, which may differ across countries. Household wealth quintiles are usually determined with the help of an asset index, calculated from assets owned by individual households. The indicator can also be disaggregated by age or age group of students, level of education, and other dimensions specified in the global indicator 4.5.1 (parity index) as available.

### **Data required**

Population in the relevant age group by the highest level of education or grade completed; data on the structure (entrance age and duration) of each level of education. Data should

also ideally be made available on the date of interview and month of birth to calculate the age at the beginning of the school year.

### **Data sources**

Population censuses and household surveys which collect data on the highest level of education or grade completed by children and young people in a household, through self- or household-declaration. In the former case, each household member above a certain age reports his or her own level of educational attainment. In the latter case, one person, usually the head of the household or another reference person, indicates the highest grade and/or level of education completed by each member of the household. Administrative data from ministries of education on the structure of the education system (entrance ages and durations) are also needed.

Surveys can serve as a source of data if they collect information for the age groups of concern. In addition to national surveys, international sample surveys, such as Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS, <http://dhsprogram.com>) or Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS, <http://mics.unicef.org>), are another source. These surveys are designed to meet commonly agreed upon international data needs and aim to assure cross-national comparability, while also providing data for national policy purposes. These surveys are implemented on a regular basis in selected countries, on average every 3 to 5 years.

Population censuses can also be a source of attainment data but they are carried out less frequently than household surveys, often only once per decade.

Data on attainment collected with surveys or censuses are usually mapped to ISCED levels post-enumeration.

### **Quality assurance**

Accurate data on the structure of the national education system and on educational attainment by single year of age are needed for calculating this indicator. The UIS sets standards, develops questionnaires and quality control protocols for country data reporting, and maintains the global database on the structure of national education systems. The global database with completion rates is maintained by the UIS and the Global Education Monitoring Report.

### **Limitations and comments**

Education levels and grades reported in household surveys may not align with the country ISCED mappings, with implications for comparability. Programme completion is typically determined using data on the highest grade completed and the official duration for the given level. As a result, individuals that complete a programme corresponding to a given ISCED level that has a duration less than the official duration of that ISCED level are assumed to not

have completed. In addition, changes in the official duration of education levels over time can prevent the accurate assessment of the completion status of older cohorts.