

SDG indicator metadata

(Harmonized metadata template - format version 1.1)

0. Indicator information (SDG_INDICATOR_INFO)

0.a. Goal (SDG_GOAL)

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

0.b. Target (SDG_TARGET)

Target 4.6: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

0.c. Indicator (SDG_INDICATOR)

Indicator 4.6.1: Youth/adult literacy rate.

0.d. Series (SDG_SERIES_DESCR)

Not applicable

0.e. Metadata update (META_LAST_UPDATE)

2025-07-14

0.f. Related indicators (SDG_RELATED_INDICATORS)

4.4.2, 4.4.3.

0.g. International organisations(s) responsible for global monitoring

(SDG_CUSTODIAN_AGENCIES)

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS)

1. Data reporter (CONTACT)

1.a. Organisation (CONTACT_ORGANISATION)

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS)

2. Definition, concepts, and classifications (IND_DEF_CON_CLASS)

2.a. Definition and concepts (STAT_CONC_DEF)

Literacy is the ability to read and write, with understanding, a short, simple sentence about one's everyday life. This definition emphasizes basic literacy, focusing on two core skills: reading and writing. The concept of literacy has since evolved to embrace several skill domains, including numeracy, each conceived on a scale of different mastery levels and serving different purposes.

2.b. Unit of measure (UNIT_MEASURE)

Percentage. This indicator is expressed as percentage of the number of literate persons out of the total number of persons in the same age group, excluding persons with unknown literacy status.

2.c. Classifications (CLASS_SYSTEM)

Not applicable

3. Data source type and data collection method (SRC_TYPE_COLL_METHOD)

3.a. Data sources (SOURCE_TYPE)

National population census, sample household or labour force surveys. Data on literacy are typically collected through self- or household-declaration in population censuses or sample household surveys that include a module on literacy and where data are collected based on self- or household-declaration.

Data are compiled through the following approaches:

- Data collection: from National Statistical Office and [UNSD repository \(UNdata\), which compile data](#) from national population censuses.

Microdata analysis: the indicator is calculated using microdata by the UIS and its partners such as the Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

For regional averages calculation, the UIS applies the Global Age-specific Literacy Projections Model (GALP).

3.b. Data collection method (COLL_METHOD)

The UIS literacy data collection includes counts of the population by literacy status (total, literate, illiterate, and not specified) for the population aged 15 years and older, by location (national, urban, and rural), age group (five-year age groups 15-19, 20-24, ..., 80-84, 85+, and age unknown), and sex (total, males, and females). Information collected also include metadata necessary for UIS and data users to better understand and interpret the literacy data produced by Member States.

3.c. Data collection calendar (FREQ_COLL)

The UIS collects literacy and educational attainment data annually. Literacy data from the UNSD repository are updated twice a year, in alignment with UNSD's biannual UNdata updates.

3.d. Data release calendar (REL_CAL_POLICY)

Data is released by the UIS in February/March and September every year.

3.e. Data providers (DATA_SOURCE)

National Statistical Offices, Ministries of Education.

3.f. Data compilers (COMPILING_ORG)

UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS).

3.g. Institutional mandate (INST_MANDATE)

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is the statistical branch of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Institute produces internationally comparable data and methodologies in the fields of education, science, culture and communication for countries at all stages of development.

The [Education 2030 Framework for Action §100](#) has clearly states that: *“In recognition of the importance of harmonization of monitoring and reporting, the UIS will remain the official source of cross-nationally comparable data on education. It will continue to produce international monitoring indicators based on its annual education survey and on other data sources that guarantee international comparability for more than 200 countries and territories. In addition to collecting data, the UIS will work with partners to develop new Last updated: May 2021 indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to better assess progress across the targets related to UNESCO’s mandate, working in coordination with the SDG-Education 2030 SC”.*

4. Other methodological considerations (OTHER_METHOD)

4.a. Rationale (RATIONALE)

Literacy represents a potential for further intellectual growth and contribution to economic, social, and cultural development of society. If disaggregated literacy rates help identify disparities within a population that hinder personal and social development allowing targeted interventions that promote social mobility and economic growth.

Numeracy, as a domain of literacy, refers to the ability to understand, use, and communicate mathematical concepts in everyday life. It includes basic arithmetic, interpreting data, and solving simple numerical problems. Unlike reading and writing, information on numeracy is not systematically collected in national population censuses and may therefore be underrepresented in the monitoring of this indicator. To better capture basic numeracy skills, further development of demographic censuses and sample survey instruments is needed, including the formulation of context-relevant and meaningful questions.

4.b. Comment and limitations (REC_USE_LIM)

For most countries literacy is self-reported but there may be some challenges associated to changes over time in a given country and to differences in definition across countries.

Literacy should be differentiated from functional literacy. A person who is functionally literate can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his [or her] group and community and for enabling him [or her] to continue to use reading, writing, and calculating for his [or her] own and the community’s development.

4.c. Method of computation (DATA_COMP)

Percentage of the number of literate persons out of the total number of persons in the same age group, excluding persons with unknown literacy status.

$$LR_{AG_i} = \frac{LP_{AG_i}}{P_{AG_i}}$$

where:

LR_{AG_i} = literacy rate of population in age group i .

LP_{AG_i} = literate population in age group i .

P_{AG_i} = population in age group i , excluding persons with unknown literacy status.

i = 15 years and above (adults), 15 to 24 years old (youth), 25 to 64 years old, 65 years and above.

4.d. Validation (DATA_VALIDATION)

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics shares all indicator values and notes on methodology with National Statistical Offices, Ministries of Education, or other relevant agencies in individual countries for their review, feedback, and validation before the publication of the data.

4.e. Adjustments (ADJUSTMENT)

Data should cover the national population in the specific age group and should follow common definitions.

4.f. Treatment of missing values (i) at country level and (ii) at regional level (IMPUTATION)

- At country level

No imputations are made by data compiler.

- At regional and global levels

When possible, data gaps are filled with latest available value.

4.g. Regional aggregations (REG_AGG)

Regional aggregates are calculated using a statistical model, the [UIS Global Age-specific Literacy Projections Model](#).

4.h. Methods and guidance available to countries for the compilation of the data at the national level (DOC_METHOD)

The UIS has elaborated guidance for the countries on the methodology that should be used to calculate this indicator based on the Literacy and Educational Attainment survey and the *“UIS Guidelines and Methodology for the Collection, Processing, and Dissemination of International Literacy Data”*, version 5.

4.i. Quality management (QUALITY_MGMT)

The UIS maintains a global database used to produce this indicator and defines the protocols and standards for data and metadata reporting by countries. For transparency purposes, the inclusion of a data point in the database is completed by following a protocol and is reviewed by UIS technical focal points to ensure consistency and overall data quality, based on objective criteria to ensure that only the most recent and reliable information are included in the database.

4.j Quality assurance (QUALITY_ASSURE)

The indicator by age groups should be produced based on consistent, national level (in case of census), or nationally representative (in case of sample survey) data on literate and illiterate populations according to national literacy definition.

4.k Quality assessment (QUALITY_ASSMNT)

Criteria for quality assessment include: data sources must include proper documentation; data values must be representative at the national population level and, if not, should be footnoted; data are plausible and based on trends and consistency with previously published/reported values for the indicator.

5. Data availability and disaggregation (COVERAGE)

Data availability:

160 countries with at least one data point for the period 2000-2023.

Time series:

1970-2023 in the SDG Global database.

Disaggregation:

Literacy rate is disaggregated by age groups (15 years and above, 15 to 24 years old, 25 to 64 years old; and 65 years and above); location (urban/rural), and wealth (poorest/richest quintiles).

6. Comparability / deviation from international standards (COMPARABILITY)

Sources of discrepancies

Literacy data are derived from different sources - typically national population census, household or labour force surveys - and may be subject to differences in national literacy definitions used.

7. References and Documentation (OTHER_DOC)

URL:

The new [UIS Data Browser](#)

References:

- UIS Questionnaire on Literacy and Educational Attainment: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-questionnaires>
- The [UIS Global Age-specific Literacy Projections Model](#).