

## USAID Youth in Development Policy

### *Data Source and Definition: Youth Global and Country Population*

USAID's [2012 Youth in Development Policy](#) defines youth as people ages 10–29. In the process of updating the Policy in 2021, USAID used the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Population Division's [World Population Prospects](#) as the basis for global- and country-level youth population numbers. The data review found that today, there are currently **2.4 billion young people** ages 10–29 living in the world—the largest youth population in history.

#### ***How did we get to 2.4 billion?***

USAID added together the following age groups: 10–14, 15–19, 20–24, 25–29 from World Population Prospects, which calculates and releases information to the public every five years. The most recent revision of World Population Prospects, which is the basis for this calculation, was completed in 2019. For its calculation of total population by five-year age group, they aggregate estimated values for 235 distinct countries and areas. The value for each country is an estimate taken from national census estimates (for certain countries over certain years, estimates are taken from other national surveys or administrative records such as birth certificates, or multilateral survey estimates).

#### ***USAID's Use of World Population Prospects***

The Youth in Development Policy November 2021 update uses World Population Prospects' total population by five-year age group as the basis for global and country youth estimates. The Youth in Development Policy considers **four** distinct age groups to comprise the youth age cohort: 10–14, 15–19, 20–24, 25–29.

*USAID uses the term youth and young people interchangeably and while youth development programs often focus on youth in the 15-to-24-year age range, USAID defines youth as individuals aged 10–29. USAID defines the different periods of youth as follows: early adolescence (10–14); adolescence (15–19); emerging adulthood (20–24); and transition to adulthood (25–29).*

#### ***United Nations DESA Use of World Population Prospects***

Multiple UN agencies, including DESA, use World Population Prospects' total population by five-year age group as the basis for global and country youth estimates. Unlike USAID, the UN considers **two** distinct age groups to comprise the “youth” age cohort: 15–19, 20–24—and **three** distinct age groups to comprise the ‘young people’ age cohort: 10–14, 15–19, 20–24. External UN publications reference World Population Prospects, such as [International Youth Day 2019](#) or UNFPA's [State of the World](#) publication.

#### ***Conclusions***

USAID Youth in Development Policy estimates for global- and country-level youth populations will be **higher** than estimates published by the UN, its derivative agencies and non-affiliated entities that consider a more narrow UN definition for youth and young people.

While estimates found in the Youth in Development Policy may differ from UN publications, the data derives from the same source—USAID estimates for youth population are consistent with other donors' external publications.