



## Correspondence

Michael Mncedisi Willie

Council for Medical Schemes, Policy Research and Monitoring, Pretoria, South Africa

E-mail: m.willie@medicalschemes.co.za

- Received Date: 26 May 2023
- Accepted Date: 04 Jun 2023
- Publication Date: 09 Jun 2023

## Copyright

© 2023 Authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

# Distinguishing Between Population and Target Population: A Mini Review

Michael Mncedisi Willie

Council for Medical Schemes, Policy Research and Monitoring, Pretoria, South Africa

## Introduction

In various research studies, market analyses, and interventions, it is essential to differentiate between the population and the target population. Understanding the distinction between these terms is crucial for accurate data collection, analysis, and implementation of strategies. Both population and target population play distinct roles in research design, sampling, and decision-making processes.

## Population

Population refers to the entire group of individuals or elements that share a common characteristic or feature. It represents the larger, comprehensive group that is the focus of a study or analysis [1]. In research, the population is the total set of individuals from which a sample is drawn to make inferences or generalizations [2]. For instance, in a study on the prevalence of a disease, the population would encompass all individuals who could potentially be affected by that disease within a specific geographic region or timeframe.

## Examples of population

### Epidemiological Study

In a study examining the prevalence of diabetes in a specific country, the population would encompass all individuals residing in that country, regardless of their age, gender, or other characteristics [3].

### Market Research

When conducting market research to understand consumer preferences for a new product, the population would include all potential consumers within the target market. For instance, if the product is a new type of smartphone, the population would consist of all individuals who use or have the potential to use smartphones [4].

### Education Study

In an educational study investigating the effects of a teaching method on student performance, the population would encompass all students within a particular educational institution or grade level [5].

## Public Opinion Survey

When conducting a survey to gauge public opinion on a political issue, the population would include all eligible voters within a specific region or country [6].

## Target population

On the other hand, the target population refers to a specific subset or segment within the larger population that is the primary focus of a study, intervention, or marketing strategy [1]. It represents a narrower group of individuals who possess specific characteristics or meet certain criteria [2]. The identification of the target population is based on the research question or the objectives of a particular initiative. For example, in a survey about a new product, the target population would be the specific demographic or consumer group for whom the product is intended, such as young adults aged 18-24 who are interested in fitness.

## Examples of target population

### Healthcare Research

For a study examining the effectiveness of a new medication for a specific disease, the target population would consist of individuals diagnosed with that disease within a specific age range and demographic profile [1].

### Social Intervention Programs

In a program aimed at reducing teenage smoking rates, the target population would be adolescents between a certain age range who are at risk of smoking or currently engage in smoking behavior [7].

### Marketing Campaigns

A marketing campaign promoting a new line of athletic shoes may target individuals who are actively engaged in fitness activities and fall within a specific age and income bracket [4].

### Educational Research

In a study evaluating the impact of a teaching method on academic performance, the target population could be students from a specific grade level or school district [5].

**Citation:** Willie MM. Distinguishing Between Population and Target Population: A Mini Review. Sur Res J. 2023; 3(2):1-2.

## Conclusion

In this mini review, we have examined the concept of differentiating between the population and the target population in research and its importance for accurate and effective analysis. We explored the key differences between these two terms and their implications for research design, sampling methods, and generalizability of findings. By clearly distinguishing between the population and the target population, researchers can enhance the validity and applicability of their study results. One of the main findings of this study is that the population refers to the entire group or universe of individuals that the researcher is interested in studying. On the other hand, the target population represents a subset of the larger population that meets specific criteria or characteristics. Understanding this distinction is crucial because it allows researchers to focus their efforts on a specific subgroup within the larger population, which can improve the precision and relevance of their research findings. Moreover, we have highlighted the significance of defining the target population accurately. By clearly specifying the characteristics, attributes, or criteria that define the target population, researchers can ensure that their study findings are relevant and applicable to the specific group they intend to study. Failing to differentiate between the population and the target population can lead to biased or misleading conclusions that may not be generalizable to the intended group.

## References

1. Banerjee A, Chaudhury S. Statistics without tears: Populations and samples. *Ind Psychiatry J*. 2010;19(1):60-65.
2. Bhandari P. Population vs. Sample | Definitions, Differences & Examples. Scribbr.2022. Retrieved May 31, 2023, from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/population-vs-sample/>.
3. Borrell LN, Dallo FJ, White K. Education and diabetes in a racially and ethnically diverse population. *Am J Public Health*. 2006;96(9):1637-1642.
4. Langford AT, Solid CA, Scott E, et al. Mobile Phone Ownership, Health Apps, and Tablet Use in US Adults With a Self-Reported History of Hypertension: Cross-Sectional Study. *JMIR Mhealth Uhealth*. 2019;7(1):e12228.
5. Malik RH, Asad Abbas Rizvi AA. Effect of Classroom Learning Environment on Students' Academic Achievement in Mathematics at Secondary Level. *Bulletin of Education and Research*. 2018;40(2): 207-218.
6. Wagner M, Johann D, Kritzinger S. Voting at 16: Turnout and the quality of vote choice. *Elect Stud*. 2012;31(2):372-383.
7. Harvey J, Chadi N; Canadian Paediatric Society, Adolescent Health Committee. Preventing smoking in children and adolescents: Recommendations for practice and policy. *Paediatr Child Health*. 2016;21(4):209-221