

Item 3a: Introduction – Rationale

Provide justification for included age groups, ranges, or developmental stages

Title	1a	Title
Introduction	3a	Rationale <i>Justification</i>
	3b	Rationale <i>Treatment effects</i>
Methods	5a	Eligibility criteria
	13d.a.	Synthesis methods
Results	17a	Study characteristics
Discussion	23b.a	Limitations

Key elements for reporting this item:

- Reasons for including certain age groups, providing age ranges; developmental stages; disease stage, subtype, or severity
- Expected differences and/or similarities across multiple included age groups/ranges, or if relevant/supported by evidence, in the context of critical contextual factors (e.g., demographic factors (e.g., race, ethnicity), biological sex, geographical location)

Example:

“Hundreds of randomized clinical trials (RCTs) have examined the effects of psychological treatments for depression. However, most of this research has been conducted separately in children [mean age ≤13 years] and adolescents [defined as 13-18 years],^[reference] in younger^[reference] [18-24 years] and middle-aged adults [24-55 years],^[reference] and in older adults [55-75 years].^[reference] Therefore, it is not known whether therapies have comparable effects across different age groups. Although some research has focused on differential effects of therapies in younger and older adults,^[reference] to our knowledge, there is no meta-analysis focusing on psychotherapies across the age range from children and adolescents to younger and older adults.

It is important to study effects of therapies across age groups for several reasons. First, differences identified between age groups can inform clinicians about the potential of treatments across age groups and may help inform treatment selection. Second, differential effects may also indicate differences between age groups in what procedures are required for symptom reduction, in the working mechanisms of the therapies, and even in the psychological processes involved in depression.”

Example adapted to include age ranges as defined in the paper

Cuijpers P, Karyotaki E, Eckshtain D, et al. Psychotherapy for Depression Across Different Age Groups: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Psychiatry* 2020;77(7):694–702. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.0164