

DHS questionnaire suggestions: women's work and economic activity

Comments from the Data2X initiative on addressing global gender data gaps

<http://www.unfoundation.org/what-we-do/issues/women-and-population/data2x.html>

The DHS is an invaluable survey for tracking outcomes for women across multiple domains. There is a strong emphasis in the survey questionnaire on understanding women's roles in intrahousehold decisionmaking, which are often tied to their economic bargaining power. The following minor adjustments to existing DHS questions on women's participation in the economy would help greatly in addressing major global data gaps in this area, including women's informal work, mobility, and access to finance. Given the coverage of the DHS across several spheres of individual and household wellbeing, it could enhance the DHS's role as one of the few global surveys where researchers could understand the relationship between women's economic outcomes, their health, nutrition, fertility, and domestic violence.

A. Women's employment

The following are the current set of questions on women's employment from the DHS Women's Questionnaire (section 8):

807	Aside from your own housework, have you done any work in the last seven days?	YES 1 NO 2	→ 811
808	As you know, some women take up jobs for which they are paid in cash or kind. Others sell things, have a small business or work on the family farm or in the family business. In the last seven days, have you done any of these things or any other work?	YES 1 NO 2	→ 811
809	Although you did not work in the last seven days, do you have any job or business from which you were absent for leave, illness, vacation, maternity leave, or any other such reason?	YES 1 NO 2	→ 811
810	Have you done any work in the last 12 months?	YES 1 NO 2	→ 815
811	What is your occupation, that is, what kind of work do you mainly do?	_____ <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> _____ _____	
812	Do you do this work for a member of your family, for someone else, or are you self-employed?	FOR FAMILY MEMBER 1 FOR SOMEONE ELSE 2 SELF-EMPLOYED 3	

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NO.	QUESTIONS AND FILTERS	CODING CATEGORIES	SKIP
813	Do you usually work throughout the year, or do you work seasonally, or only once in a while?	THROUGHOUT THE YEAR 1 SEASONALLY/PART OF THE YEAR 2 ONCE IN A WHILE 3	
814	Are you paid in cash or kind for this work or are you not paid at all?	CASH ONLY 1 CASH AND KIND 2 IN KIND ONLY 3 NOT PAID 4	

Suggested revisions:

Women in developing countries are often involved in multiple work activities throughout the year, across different sectors, with different economic arrangements, and are often heavily concentrated in informal employment and subsistence agriculture (ILO, 2013; World Bank, FAO, & UN 2010). Other surveys covering adults' work, including the World Bank LSMS and many censuses, therefore tend to ask about activity over the last 12 months as well as the past week. With a few adjustments, this module would be able to address the diversity of women's activities, be comparable with other international surveys, and contribute to a better understanding of the extent of labor supply across different spheres of economic activity. Also as mentioned above, the DHS has detailed data across other spheres, including health and fertility, which other surveys do not have and so the DHS could play an important role in allowing researchers to correlate economic outcomes with women's outcomes in other areas.

A proposed alternative flow of questions (replacing Q. 807-814 above) is as follows:

Q.1 As you know, some women take up jobs for which they are paid in cash or in kind. Others sell things, have a small farm or do work for the family farm or business. Did you do any such work in the last 12 months? Y/N. *If yes: continue with Q.2 ; if no: skip to Q.6.*

Q.2 What type of work did you do?:

	Days last week	Months last year	Agriculture/non-agriculture/both?
Family worker			
Work for others (not family)			
Self-employed			

Q.3 Which of the above is your primary occupation?

Q.4 How were you paid in your primary occupation? Cash=1 , In kind=2, Cash+in kind= 3, Unpaid=4.

Q.5 (Regarding security/quality of employment of the main occupation): Is there an enforceable contract guaranteeing time, earnings, or any related benefits? (Y/N)

Q.6 If you are not working, why? Absent for leave/illness=1, Currently looking for work=2, Looking but stopped=3, Not interested in looking for work=4, Not allowed to work=5

The questions above would also answer the existing DHS question on seasonality (Q. 813) more accurately by capturing the extent of labor supply, as well as work across different activities and sectors, including informal and subsistence work. The incidence and ability of women to look for work is another important area related to their mobility, that is also an important data gap in surveys.

B. Access to finance (along with mobile banking)

Currently the only question on access to finance is in the household questionnaire (Q. 123: "Does any member of this household have a bank account? Y/N.") Women's access to finance, including their credit constraints, is an important data gap in gender statistics worldwide, and of interest to the DHS since access to finance is highly correlated with their intrahousehold bargaining power (UN Economic and Social Council, Statistical Commission, 2012; Demirguc-Kunt, Klapper and Singer 2013). In Section 8 of the questionnaire, it would therefore be very useful to have the following short set of questions:

Q.1 In the last 12 months, have you taken out a loan? Y/N. *If yes: continue with Q.2, if no: skip to Q.3.*

Q.2 If so, from where? Microfinance=1, commercial bank or government=2, friends/family=3, moneylender=4, other=5. *Continue to Q.4*

Q.3 If not, why not (multiple answers could be allowed)? Too far/difficult to reach institution=1, Didn't think would get a loan/no collateral=2, Don't need=3, Not allowed to take a loan=4, Don't like to take debt=5, Can rely on other support networks=6) *Continue to Q.4*

Q.4 Do you own a mobile phone? Y/N (*currently only asked at the HH level in the DHS (Q. 110), but women's use of mobile phones in developing countries has been highlighted as an important avenue to access economic opportunities – see World Bank, 2014*). *If yes: continue with Q.5. If not: skip to Q.6.*

Q.5 Do you use your mobile phone for financial transactions? Y/N. *Continue with Q.6*

Q.6 Do you use any other individual's phone for financial transactions? Household member=1, Friends=2, Other=3.

Finally, the following three additional questions are more sensitive, and might be affected by the presence of other household members. However, they would help greatly in clarifying women's roles and constraints in household finance:

Q.6 Do you save any money? Y/N. *If yes: continue with Q.7, if no: skip to Q.8.*

Q.7 If so, where? Microfinance institution=1, Commercial bank=2, At home (cash)=3, At home (tangible assets such as jewelry, property, livestock)=4

Q.8 If not, why not? Not enough money to save=1, Not allowed to manage money=2, Other=3

References

Demirguc-Kunt, Asli; Leora Klapper; and Dorothe Singer (2013). "The Global Findex Database: Women and Financial Inclusion." Findex Notes No. 9, Washington, DC: World Bank.

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