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Subject: Adding question on sexual frequency

Posted by [marieclairepeytr](#) on Fri, 11 Apr 2014 13:32:55 GMT

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Dear Team,

Having the sexual frequency variable back in the DHS questionnaires would be a great contribution to understanding better the variation of sexual behaviors across countries. It would also be a great utility for family planning programs, and to providing more adequate contraceptive methods. Indeed, hormonal contraceptives are less likely to be perceived as appealing when the women perceives she is at low risk of getting pregnant, because of low sexual relations frequency.

For now, the only variable that would allow to "proxy" sexual frequency would be V527 ("date of last sexual intercourse"). Meekers & Van Rossem (2005) have created a variable deriving the daily probability of experiencing a sexual act using the proportion of women who had sex the day before. Nonetheless, sexual recency can only provide us an approximated guess on sexual frequency.

The old variable that calculated sexual frequency (number of episodes in the last 4 weeks) had questionable reliability, as does any recall variable in macro surveys. Nonetheless, Thomas Brown (2000) did several tests that give us encouraging results on the reliability of the sexual frequency variable (tested with sub-Saharan African countries) :

- Sexual frequency variable had high response rates (in his study, above 99%), which shows data was not biased by selective sampling
- The variable showed little heaping (No real evidence of recall multiplied by 4)
- Also, sexual frequency showed great internal consistency with sexual recency. There was a consistent negative association between the mean number of days since last sex and the coital frequency.

It would be a great plus to rely on more variables than coital recency in order to have an ideal of the sexual exposure of women. Indeed, married or unmarried women that only have sex a couple of times a month might not take hormonal contraception because she might feel she's not really at risk of getting pregnant. In sub-Saharan Africa for example, where fecundity and unmet need is high, sexual frequency can also be low for many reasons (i.e.: postpartum abstinence, polygamy, migration, spousal house separation).

Having indications on the number of sexual episodes in last 4 week or in last month could provide valuable information in order to provide a method mix that is more relevant to the need of each women.