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Subject: Re: Item V613 of the Recode

Posted by [Bridgette-DHS](#) on Tue, 26 Dec 2023 22:40:01 GMT

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Following is a response from Senior DHS staff member, Tom Pullum:

I didn't mean to move you in the direction of one interpretation or another. I would only suggest that you think in terms of association rather than causation. If someone gives a non-numeric response to a question about desired family size, I think that's an illustration of their world view. To get at a deeper meaning, I would want more in-depth interviews than is possible with DHS data. Your approach sounds good to me.

The question has different meanings for women who are early or late in in the childbearing years. There is a tendency for older women to rationalize the number they actually had. Also, some very large numerical values found in some surveys, like 20 or more, could probably be interpreted as non-numeric.

Here is a link to something I wrote more than 40 years ago:

[https://wfs.dhsprogram.com/WFS-SR/ISI-WFS\\_SR-09\\_Pullum\\_1980\\_Illustrative%20Analysis%20-%20Fertility%20Preferences%20in%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf](https://wfs.dhsprogram.com/WFS-SR/ISI-WFS_SR-09_Pullum_1980_Illustrative%20Analysis%20-%20Fertility%20Preferences%20in%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf)

I have not stayed with the topic and can't give specific citations related to non-numeric responses.