
Subject: Re: mean and median duration of breastfeeding
Posted by [Bridgette-DHS](#) on Wed, 22 May 2013 16:39:43 GMT
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Here is a response from one of our DHS experts Shea Rutstein.

Estimates of duration of the postpartum variables (breastfeeding, amenorrhea, insusceptibility) can be based on recall of durations or current status. While an appropriate methodology for calculating means from recall of durations is using a life table, the well known issues of substantial heaping on durations which are multiples of 3 or 6 indicate that the results will be biased and inaccurate. The DHS reports therefore use current status rather than recall. They also use medians, which are less subject to the effects of long tails than are means. The prevalence-incidence method of calculating a mean is also a current status measure. However, it is based on a stationary population, meaning that there it assumes a constant numeric flow of births. This assumption is violated in many cases, especially for the ends of the fertile age distribution since there were far fewer births to women now 15-19 three years ago (when they were 12-16) than one year ago (when they were 14-18) and so the means will be wrong. The P/I mean is not so bad for the whole age group 15-49 but is somewhat affected by the few women breastfeeding (amenorrheic) for a long time since it is a mean.

I would use an analysis which looks at whether the woman was currently breastfeeding or amenorrheic or insusceptible at the time of the survey and whether she had begun using contraception since the last birth.