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Subject: Marital status

Posted by [HertrichVero](#) on Fri, 11 Apr 2014 16:29:24 GMT

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Question 8. Marital status.

Revision : Extend the question to the individuals aged 12 and over (instead 15 and over)

The question on marital status included in the HH Questionnaire provides the opportunity to describe marriage patterns (Hajnal indicators). But the restriction to the individuals aged 15 and more is a real limitation; my suggestion is to extend the question to the individuals aged 12 and over (while keeping the same wording and response categories).

Motivations:

- 1) One main methodological problem in the analysis of individual data is the transfer of young women below the limit of eligibility (age 15). This is rationale for the surveyor in order to decrease the amount of work (Pullum and especially frequent in Subsaharan Africa where many people do not know their age. This underestimation of age is probably higher for never-married girls, explaining that estimation of mean/median age at marriage is lower according DHS then censuses (Hertrich and Lardoux).
- 2) Extending the question below age 15 will offer the possibility to precise the pattern of errors around the age of eligibility and to calculate more reliable and comparable estimations of mean/median age at marriage.
- 3) The challenge is important in terms of results on the issue of adolescent behaviors and reproductive health. Indeed nearly all the indicators on adolescents are based on the individual data and are possibly biased by the selection of the sample around age 15. The underestimation of never-married among 15-19 in the individual sample means an overestimation of ever-married women, and of women who married at early age, with possible biases on various issues: sexual initiation, contraception, conjugal pattern, level of education etc. Collecting the data on the whole population, since age 12, will improve the estimations and approaches on adolescent behaviors (including for instance the measure of "adolescent" or "child" marriage).

This change concerns mainly countries with early marriage patterns, especially SubSaharan Africa.