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Subject: Item V613 of the Recode  
Posted by [JonKoch](#) on Fri, 22 Dec 2023 10:12:40 GMT  
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Hello there,

My data analysis project for my thesis has thus far been quite fruitful (thanks again for the help with the clusters)

I detected a significant relationship between the aggregate presence of answer 96 for item V613, Ideal Family Size(IFS) at various group levels (regional, religious, and ethnic), and individually heightened IFS. The code book suggests that this signifies answers like "up to God", but I am interested in whether that is the specific meaning.

Reason being, if the answer is specifically religious in nature, then I would have a nice interpretative framing for the correlation I have found.

I am still thinking about trying to build correlates with proxies for traditionally religious attitudes, but that would be a whole new can of worms for me, because I'd have to make an additional argument and build more aggregate frames, and I am on a relatively tight schedule.

So, is there any source anybody could point to that explains the nature of non-numeric answers to V613?

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Subject: Re: Item V613 of the Recode  
Posted by [Bridgette-DHS](#) on Fri, 22 Dec 2023 14:13:03 GMT  
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Following is a response from Senior DHS staff member, Tom Pullum:

Non-numeric responses to questions about ideal family size were much more common in the past, in many countries, than they are now. If you look at the older literature on fertility intentions, for example by Norman Ryder and Charles Westoff, and more recently John Casterline, you will find interpretations of non-numeric responses. Conrad Hackett analyzes religion+demography. Non-numeric responses reflect the degree to which the question even seems relevant to the respondent, as well as a general fatalistic approach to life events. To me, the connection with religion is likely to be indirect, but it would be worth looking at. DHS surveys often include a question on religion but nothing on religiosity. I hope other forum users will offer suggestions.

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Subject: Re: Item V613 of the Recode  
Posted by [JonKoch](#) on Fri, 22 Dec 2023 16:01:34 GMT  
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The thing is, I created aggregates for the presence of non-numerical responses on the regional, religious, and ethnic level, and it strongly correlates with high IFS otherwise on all those levels, which suggests that the attitudes that produce the non-numerics are causally linked to pro-natalist attitudes.

I could let that stand on its own, of course, but if the non-numeric ("Don't know" is coded separately as 98 and automatically removed from the aggregates, so I don't necessarily think I can say that it looks like fatalism. Rather, the opposite.) has implicit religious meaning, that would obviously make some sense and provide for a framing of my findings.

Thank you for recommending authors. Do you by any chance also have links or titles of papers I could look into for context?

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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.

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Subject: Re: Item V613 of the Recode  
Posted by [JonKoch](#) on Thu, 25 Jan 2024 14:52:05 GMT  
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Dear Bridgette,

I had totally forgotten to reply to this. The paper is actually pretty helpful and definitely gives me some material to work with in my analysis.

Please give my thanks to Tom. I also wondered how exactly to cite this paper when I use some of it in my thesis.

I found this citation in Google Scholar:

Pullum, T. W. (1981). Adjusting Stated Fertility Preferences. Predicting Fertility: Demographic Studies of Birth Expectations, 129.

Is that the correct one?

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Subject: Re: Item V613 of the Recode

Posted by [Bridgette-DHS](#) on Thu, 25 Jan 2024 16:00:33 GMT

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

You are welcome!

Here is the citation for that 1980 Illustrative Analysis:

Pullum, T. W. 1980. An illustrative analysis of fertility preferences in Sri Lanka. Scientific Report Series, No. 9, World Fertility Survey (International Statistical Institute).

The 1981 paper is different, but there is probably some overlap. I'd be surprised if you can find it. I may not even have a copy:

Pullum, T. W. 1981. Adjusting stated fertility preferences for the effect of actual family size, with application to World Fertility Survey data. In G. Hendershot and P. Placek (eds.), Predicting Fertility: Demographic Studies of Birth Expectations. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington books, Inc. (D.C. Heath and Co.), pp. 129-149.

Thanks for your interest!

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