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Subject: duration of breastfeeding vs. months of breastfeeding

Posted by [charvey91](#) on Thu, 28 Apr 2016 15:15:21 GMT

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Hi,

I have been reading the literature in the DHS variable guide, as well in the guide to DHS recode manual about variables m4 and m5. m4 is the duration of breastfeeding and m5 is months of breastfeeding. However, I am confused as to what these actually show. Were women asked about how long they breastfed child [name] in the questionnaire? I have looked through the questionnaire and can't find any questions corresponding to specifically the duration of breastfeeding.

I also read the article by Tom Pullum (<http://www.ghspjournal.org/content/2/3/355.full>) which states that there is no question in the DHS surveys which asks "how long did you breastfeed [name]?" So my question is, how were m4 and m5 derived? I understand that m5 is used where women are still breastfeeding at the time of survey, but what about m4?

Thanks in advance for your help!

Chloe

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Subject: Re: duration of breastfeeding vs. months of breastfeeding

Posted by [Trevor-DHS](#) on Thu, 16 Jun 2016 20:02:54 GMT

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Historically respondent's were asked how long they breastfed their children. The duration of breastfeeding reported is stored in M4, with those reporting that they are still breastfeeding recorded as code 95. M5 contains the same data, except for those who were still breastfeeding where the 95 is replaced by the number of months breastfed so far (v008 [date of interview] - b3 [date of birth of child]).

In more recent rounds of DHS the question on duration of breastfeeding has been dropped from the questionnaire as the data are not reliable and contain considerable heaping. In these later surveys those cases that would be recorded with a duration of breastfeeding in m4 in the past re recorded as code 93 (not currently breastfeeding, but ever breastfed). Those still breastfeeding are coded 94 as before. In m5, the 94 is converted into a duration of breastfeeding so far, but the code 93 are left.

DHS no longer reports breastfeeding duration based on reported durations of breastfeeding, but rather uses a current status median estimate based on whether breastfeeding by age of child. See the Guide to DHS Statistics page 17 and the section on Current Status data for more information.

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Subject: Re: duration of breastfeeding vs. months of breastfeeding

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Posted by [charvey91](#) on Wed, 22 Jun 2016 13:07:59 GMT

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Thanks a lot Trevor, this helps a lot!

Chloe

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