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Subject: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Rojin S.](#) on Mon, 27 Jul 2020 16:24:37 GMT

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Dear all,

I am currently working on the timing of the following events with NFHS 4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage.

For age at first intercourse, I am using the variable v531.

But when it comes to age at first cohabitation/marriage, I'm not sure which variable I should use.

- variable v511 gives age at first cohabitation
- the variable s314c gives us the age at the first union (calculated) and its values are similar to those of the variable v511 (but not quite -> ex: 8 years)
- there is also variable s308y which gives us the year of first marriage and variable s309 which completes it (if I understood correctly) by giving the age of persons who did not know the year of their marriage

My questions are the following:

- 1) Do the variables v511 and s314c give us the same information? If so, are the first cohabitation and the first union considered to be exactly the same event? If so, how can we explain the differences between the two variables?
- 2) Are variables v511 and s314c related to variables s308y and s309? If not, which one is preferable to use for age at first marriage/union?
- 3) For a first sexual intercourse occurring in the same year as a first cohabitation/marriage, can one deduce which occurs first?
- 4) How much do you estimate the prevalence of an age at first intercourse lower than an age at first cohabitation?

Thank you very much for your help!

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Trevor-DHS](#) on Wed, 26 Aug 2020 19:46:47 GMT

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You are correct about your interpretation of the variables.

- 1) V511 and s314c are the same except that in s314c there are cases included (incorrectly) for women for whom Gauna was not performed. Use v511.
- 2) V511 and S314 come from questions 313 and 314 in the questionnaire and are about the date and age of first union or cohabitation. S308Y and S309 are from questions 308 and 309 in the questionnaire and are about the date and age of first marriage. Formal marriage can come years before union/cohabitation, and may happen at very young ages of childhood. Thus we use the age and date of first union/cohabitation as the main variable that we use.
- 3) No, we can't tell which came first of first sexual intercourse occurring in the same year as a first

cohabitation/marriage

4) You can compare the age at first sex in years with the age at first cohabitation, but that will only tell you if there was a difference in reported age, not which came first if both are reported at the same age.

Your questions highlighted an issue in the recode datasets. Variables V509, V511 and S314C should include all women ever in union including those that are now widowed, divorced, separated or divorced. However the variables currently do not include those formerly in union, and at present are limited only to those currently married. V509 and S314C do, though, incorrectly include cases reported as Married, Gauna not performed - these latter cases should be excluded from any analysis. This same issue exists in the men's recode dataset too.

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Rojin S.](#) on Tue, 08 Sep 2020 07:33:14 GMT

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Thank you very much for those answers! These data are much clearer now, especially for those that incorrectly include gauna. It's a pity that variables V509, V511 and S314C contain only currently married women. Will this be corrected in the updates? Thank you again.

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Trevor-DHS](#) on Tue, 08 Sep 2020 13:49:00 GMT

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These will be corrected in an update in the future.

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Rojin S.](#) on Wed, 04 Nov 2020 10:13:18 GMT

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Thank you for your answers.

As I studied these variables in more detail, I noticed that I could not find the questions you mentioned (313 and 314/308 and 309) in the questionnaire ([https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/DHSQ7/DHS7-Womans-QRE-EN-17D\\_ec2018-DHSQ7.pdf](https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/DHSQ7/DHS7-Womans-QRE-EN-17D_ec2018-DHSQ7.pdf)). Is there a mistake?

Also, to summarize what was said:

- v511 should be used as the variable indicating the age at first cohabitation but only takes into

account women who were married at the time of the survey (excluding separated, divorced and widowed women).

- s308y should be used to have the year of the first formal marriage (and contains all ever-married women)

- s309: also contains data for formal marriage? Why then only 10,342 answers are given?

Thank you again.

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Trevor-DHS](#) on Wed, 04 Nov 2020 15:00:39 GMT

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If you are using the NFHS4 data you need to look at the questionnaire for India that can be found with the report here: <https://www.dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR339-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>. Looking at the model questionnaire will not help you.

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Isha](#) on Fri, 31 Mar 2023 20:13:22 GMT

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Hello,

I am using various rounds of the India DHS couple recode files. I am using the variable v511/mv511: age at first cohabitation. However, I am unable to find if couples in this dataset include women and their husbands from their first marriage. The variables on ever been married (v535/mv535) used to gauge if women have been married earlier do not have any observations, hence I am unable to find out if these couples are in their first marriage and what percent are NOT. This will help me link if their age at cohabitation is with the current husband (in the dataset) or was with another spouse (previous marriage).

Is there a way to know this or should I merge with the individual dataset and find this? Or is this already known?

Thank you!

Best,  
Isha

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first

marriage

Posted by [Bridgette-DHS](#) on Mon, 03 Apr 2023 13:12:44 GMT

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

Staff on the analysis team at DHS have put quite a bit of time into trying to interpret, recode, and use these ages and dates in the NFHS surveys and have been unsuccessful. You can go back to the questionnaire to see what filters or skips preceded the relevant questions. We cannot provide any guidance. Perhaps others can help.

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Subject: Re: NFHS4: age at first intercourse, age at first cohabitation, age at first marriage

Posted by [Isha](#) on Tue, 04 Apr 2023 15:59:25 GMT

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Dear Bridgette and Tom,

Thank you for your help! I did some digging and was able to answer the question on if the husband is a first husband of the woman respondent in the couple data. I believe that v503 (number of unions) helps me know the percent of women who have been married once (hence the age at cohabitation/v511 is with current husband) and those who have been married more than once (hence the age at cohabitation/v511 is with a previous husband/marital partner). It helps me know if I should treat age at first cohabitation as an indicator of a couple's relationship or as an indicator of women's autonomy. But I cannot use it as an indicator of a couple's relationship since some currently women have been married earlier, unless I delete these cases.

I am sorry that it has not been easy for your team to interpret and recode these types of variables...yes there are many variables and aspects of reality that need to be rethought and verified. I agree.

Hope you have a lovely rest of the week!

Best,  
Isha

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