

NCHAT Age of Child Memo
Gabrielle Juteau and Wendy Manning
03-11-25

Issue

The NCHAT is missing data on age of the child and this memo explains the extent of the missing data and new possible variables that can be appended to the data. This has implications for not only the age of child measures but also the relationship of children to the respondent (and partner). Figure 1 details the number of cases.¹

Gallup Methodology Report

"During fieldwork, two changes were made on November 17, 2020, to address what were believed to be response errors. First, many respondents had missing age data for children in the household roster. After a review of the survey, it was determined that the visual design may be resulting in respondents overlooking this question. Two fixes were made. First, a prompt was added to the survey requesting a response if it was left blank. Second, a follow-up survey was sent to everyone who previously left the question blank (n=464 were invited and n=295 completed). This short survey asked them to provide the number of children in their household and the age of each child." (see [p. 16 of Methodology Report](#)) This survey is referred to as the 'resend survey.'

The resend survey partly helped resolve the age of child issue, but does not help with the skip pattern that is used for other questions concerning residential children in the survey. These questions were only asked if the main respondent reported an age of less than 18 years old. Table 1 documents the survey questions affected by this skip pattern.

Table 1. List of variables affected by the age skip pattern

Questions	Variable label	Valid cases
How is [Field-2] related to your current spouse/partner: Please select all that apply.	A*_HHR18_1- A*_HHR18_7	1,204
Are your children currently attending school (K-12) in-person, online, or are they homeschooled? Please select all that apply.	HHR203_1 – HHR203_4	1,058
In the past week, how satisfied were you with the way you and your spouse/partner divided childcare (e.g., putting the child to bed/waking the child up, helping child with homework)	C18B	1,204
Overall, how stressed are you about the following? Dividing childcare	C18D_B	1,205

¹ Note that Figure 1 does not include grandchildren, explaining the difference between the reported numbers in the text and the figure.

How stressed are you about the following? C. My children getting coronavirus	STRESS3_C	1,202
How stressed are you about the following? I. My child's education	STRESS3_I	1,204

Household roster's questions, including gender, race, parent-child closeness, and parent-child stress, are not influenced by these issues because they were not dependent on responses to the age of the child. It is however important to note that in cases where the respondent only selected 'Other (Please specify)' (A1_HHR17_15), they were not asked the child indicators questions (i.e., relationship to spouse, parent-child closeness and parent-child-child stress). In other words, respondents had to select either my biological child (A1_HHR17_1), my adopted child (A1_HHR17_2), my spouse/partner's child (A1_HHR17_3), my non-biological child (A1_HHR17_4), my foster child (A1_HHR17_5), or my grandchild (A1_HHR17_6) to be asked these questions.

Residential Children

Out of the 1,660 respondents with reported residential children, 19% (n = 312) did not report the age of at least one of their residential children. The vast majority of them had either one (69%) or two (24%) values missing on the age of child. The bulk of the missingness happened in September (75%) and October (12%).

The resend survey reported on the ages of children for 131 respondents (157 children). 15 of these respondents had already valid age(s) for their residential children so the resend survey reported data on ages of children for 116 respondents who were missing in the initial interview. This reduces the missingness to 11.8% (n = 196).

Next we delved into partner's survey responses and that resulted in retrieving 21 cases. As a result, 10.5% (n = 175) of respondents with reported residential children had at least one of their children's age missing, with 113 respondents (64.5%) missing all their children's age.

Table 2 presents the results from logit regression models predicting age missingness for respondents with residential children. Net of key covariates, the month of survey increased the odds of not reporting your child's age, confirming our descriptive depictions above.

For analyses that necessitate linking the age of child to child indicators, we were able to directly link the age of child to other child indicators for 51 cases. Note that we incorporated the age of the child from the resend survey only in cases where respondents had only one residential child or in cases where only one child had age missing. In other words, we retrieved child's age when it was certain that the respondent was referring to this specific child.

Non-Residential Child

Out of the 904 respondents with non-residential children, 31.2% (n = 282) did not report the age of at least one their non-residential children. The vast majority of them had either one (47.9%) or two (33.7%) values missing of the age of child. The bulk of the missingness happened in September (58.5%), October (12.4%), and November (23.4%). As a result, we have information on the age of at least one non-resident child for 663 respondents. Questions

related to the respondent and their partner’s relationship to the child were not affected by the missingness because they were no age restrictions to them.

The second column of Table 2 shows the outputs from logistic regression predicting child’s age missingness among respondents reporting having at least a non-residential child. Similarly to respondents who reported having residential children, the month of survey increased the odds of child’s age missingness. However, identifying as a woman and being older were also related to child’s age missingness, showing that the missingness may not be completely at random.

Table 2. Odds Ratios Predicting Missingness on Child's Age

	Residential child		Non-residential child			
	OR	SE	OR	SE		
Age	1.02	0.02	1.04	0.02	*	
Gender (ref. = Man)						
Woman	1.06	0.26	2.00	0.56	*	
Nonbinary	2.38	2.32	0.07	0.10		
Sexual identity (ref. = Exclusively heterosexual)						
Sexually diverse	1.45	0.52	0.68	0.33		
Race/ethnicity (ref. = White)						
Black	1.66	0.51	0.75	0.32		
Hispanic	0.97	0.35	1.17	0.49		
Asian	2.12	1.38	7.27	7.83		
Another	1.67	1.13	1.01	0.55		
Education (ref. = H.S. or less)						
Some college	1.44	0.56	0.80	0.28		
Bachelor's +	1.38	0.55	0.53	0.23		
Household income	0.99	0.09	1.00	0.13		
Union type (ref. = Married)						
Cohabiting	0.99	0.40	0.96	0.41		
Month of survey	0.57	0.05	***	0.31	0.04	***

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Aggregate variables

For analyses that do not necessitate linking the age of child to child indicators, we created a series of aggregate variables indicating whether children of certain ages are in and out the household. For comparison purposes, we focus on children who were classified as biological, adopted, non-biological, spouse/partner’s, foster child, or other and excluded grandchildren for residential children. Respondents with missingness on all ages were excluded (n = 112). Table 2 summarizes the created variables.

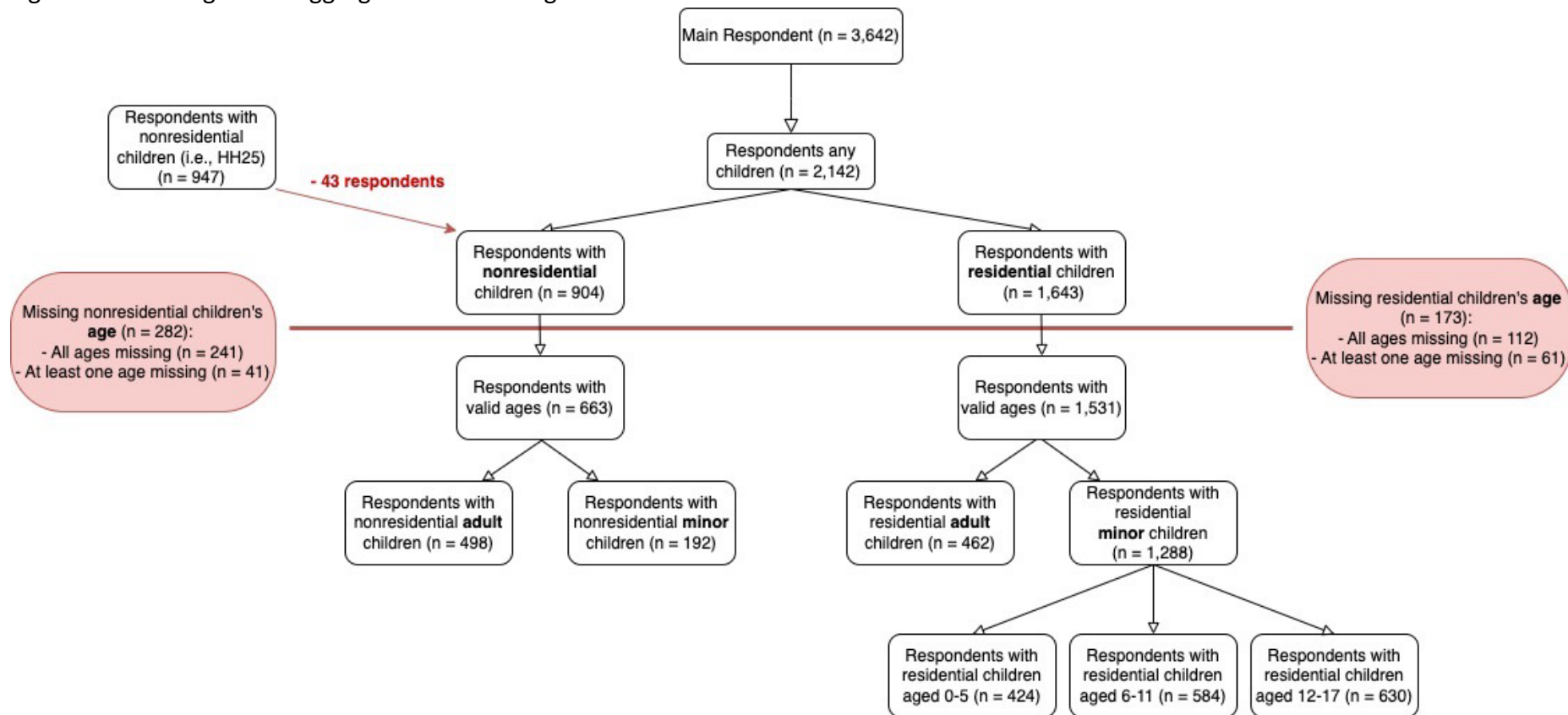
Table 2. Summary of Aggregate Children’s Age Variables

<i>Variable name</i>	<i>Variable label</i>
Residential children	
Any residential children	<i>any_rchild</i>
Number of residential children	<i>num_rchild</i>
Any minor residential children	<i>any_minreschild</i>
Number of minor residential children	<i>num_minreschild</i>
Any residential children aged 0-5	<i>any_05reschild</i>
Number of residential children aged 0-5	<i>num_05reschild</i>
Any residential children aged 6-11	<i>any_611reschild</i>
Number of residential children aged 6-11	<i>num_611reschild</i>
Any residential children aged 12-17	<i>any_1217reschild</i>
Number of residential children aged 12-17	<i>num_1217reschild</i>
Any adult residential children	<i>any_adreschild</i>
Number of adult residential children	<i>num_adreschild</i>
Nonresidential children	
Any nonresidential children	<i>any_nrchild</i>
Number of nonresidential children	<i>num_nrchild</i>
Any minor nonresidential children	<i>any_minnreschild</i>
Number of minor residential children	<i>num_minnreschild</i>
Any adult nonresidential children	<i>any_adnreschild</i>
Number of adult nonresidential children	<i>num_adnreschild</i>

Proposed solutions

To counter this problem, we suggest using the created aggregate variables mentioned above. Depending on the analyses at hand, conducting sensitivity testing or focusing on the survey months that were not problematic may be appropriate.

Figure 1. Path Diagram of Aggregate Children's Age Variables



Notes:

Grandchildren were removed for respondents with residential children.

This counts in this figure are based on responses to the main survey, resend survey, and partner survey.

Both at the residential and non-residential level, respondents with adult children and respondents with minor children are not mutually exclusive. Respondents can be in both categories.