New Family Interrelationship Variables for US IPUMS Data Projects
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Family interrelationship variables

What are family interrelationship variables? Family interrelationship variables show how many members of a household are related to each other:
- A person’s spouse or partner
- A person’s mother(s) and/or father(s)

Why are family interrelationship variables useful?
- Can easily attach characteristics of spouse/partner and parents to person
- For example:
  - Labor market status of a person’s spouse/partner
  - Education of a person’s parents

How do the new interrelationship variables improve on existing ones?

Reflect diverse family types
- Same-sex couples
- Same-sex parents
- Non-married couples
- Non-marital fertility

Comparable and consistent across different datasets
- Same logic and assumptions apply to multiple IPUMS datasets

Variables that communicate confidence in the inferred relationship
- First digit shows strength of link based on specificity of the relationship
- Second digit shows strength of link based on complexity of household composition

Information used to assign parents in ambiguous situations

Evaluating accuracy of the new family interrelationship variables

Same-sex spouse/partner links are correct
- Researchers may be wary of same-sex couple links because they can be more error-prone (Black, Gates, Sanders, and Taylor 2007)
- Among same-sex couples identified with IPUMS spouse location:
  - 99.9% match self-reported location (2006-2014 IHS; N=3,508)
  - 87.2% are gay, lesbian, or bisexual (2015-2014 IHS; N=574)

Largest Challenge: Identifying parents of grandchildren
- IPUMS family interrelationship variables correctly match most grandchildren to their self-reported parents
- Two errors do occur:
  1. 10.7% of grandchildren have no parent in the household, but IPUMS assigns parent(s) (2014 CPS ASEC; N=4,275)
  2. 8% of grandchildren have both parents in the household, but IPUMS links wrong parent(s) (2014 CPS ASEC; N=4,275)