From: Philip N. Cohen
To: Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Subject: FW: ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Comments Needed by May 16!
Date: Monday, May 06, 2013 1:18:50 PM

Dear Dr. Brian Harris-Kojetin,

I am writing to register my objection to the removal of the "number of times married" question from the American Community Survey – as described in the Federal Register and circulated by IPUMS (see email forwarded below). This simply question allows a much richer understanding of marriage, divorce, childrearing, family economics and intergenerational relations. My own work has relied on this question and I have additional analysis and proposals in process that will require it as well.

Examples of questions we can ask ONLY if we have "number of times married" include:

1. How does the age of parents at a child's birth affect children's odds of having a disability?
2. How are divorce rates affected by swings in the business cycle?
3. How many people alive today have ever been divorced?
4. How many children live in blended families, and what is their composition?
5. What is the age at first marriage for various demographic groups?

I urge OMB and the Commerce Department to continue to ask the "number of times married" question. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Philip N. Cohen

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From: IPUMS Project [mailto:ipums=umn.edu@mail335.us2.mcsv.net] **On Behalf Of** IPUMS Project
Sent: Monday, May 06, 2013 11:25 AM
To: Philip N. Cohen
Subject: ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Comments Needed by May 16!

Minnesota Population Center: Home of the IPUMS

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IPUMS

Dear IPUMS User,

I am writing to alert you that the Census Bureau is planning to drop the question on "number of times married" from the American Community Survey. For those of us who study family demography, this change would be a major loss. The times married question is not only vital for understanding blended families, it is also necessary for basic studies of nuptiality and marital instability. A recent working paper by Sheela Kennedy and myself demonstrated that the ACS is the only reliable source currently available for national divorce statistics. Without the number of times married, however, the divorce data will be badly compromised; for example, it will be impossible to construct a life table for first marriages, or to estimate the percentage of people who have ever divorced.

The news of this plan appears in the Federal Register in a single sentence at the end of an otherwise harmless notice of request for comments. If you believe as I do that this change would significantly harm the nation's statistical infrastructure, you should make your feelings known to the responsible OMB desk officer, Dr. Brian Harris-Kojetin. He can be reached at (202) 395-7245 or by email at bharrisk@omb.eop.gov. The deadline for comments is May 16.

Thank you,

Steven Ruggles
Regents Professor
Director, Minnesota Population Center

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