From: Goldstein, Joshua R.
To: Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Subject: ACS "times married" question
Date: Monday, May 06, 2013 12:57:12 PM

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I am writing to urge you to keep the question on "number of times married" in the American Community Survey. This question allows at extremely low cost the ACS to be the last remaining national level data source for the study of marriage and divorce trends. Dropping this question, as is proposed in the Federal Register, would be a major loss to the ACS's stated goal of providing "data users with timely demographic, housing, social, and economic data every year that can be compared across states, communities, and population groups."

Detailed knowledge of trends in marriage and divorce is available on a nationwide, representative basis only from the ACS. The question on "number of times married" is crucial for inferring information about the entry into 1st marriage among the never married and the frequencies of remarriage. Furthermore, because the ACS includes a wide range of geographic areas and racial and ethnic groups, this question allows demographers to study important differences between subpopulations.

The reason the question on "number of times" is needed is it allows researchers to construct marital life tables from the ACS data for the transition from "never married" to "married". Without this question, unverifiable and potentially misleading assumptions must be made in order to study marriage behavior over time and across groups.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in providing you with additional details on how important this question is for the study of demographic behavior in American society.

Sincerely,

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