From:	marianahorta0@gmail.com on behalf of Mariana Horta
To:	Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Subject:	Comments regarding the Census Bureau"s proposal to drop the number of times married question from the American Community Survey
Date:	Monday, May 06, 2013 12:56:10 PM

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I study family demography and am alarmed by the news that the census is planning to drop the question on "number of times married" from the American Community Survey.

Historically, marriage and divorce data were collected through the vital statistics system but this practice was discontinued in 1996. With the addition of the marital events question to the ACS in 2008, this survey became essential to the measurement and understanding of changes in the American family. While the addition of these questions to the ACS was linked to the Health Marriages Initiative, these questions have supported estimates that are of import to scientists and policy-makers working outside the narrow scope of this initiative to better understand recent changes in American families. The ACS question about number of times married is used, for example, to assist in the estimation of the prevalence of divorce among American adults, the number of American children living in blended families, and the construction of first marriage life tables.

Thus, I write to request that the census bureau engages demographers in a dialogue about this proposed change to the ACS questionnaire. Representatives of the Population Association of America and the Association of Population Centers should be engaged to ensure that the question is not dropped before a comparable alternative source of marriage and divorce data is identified. Currently, the ACS is considered the only reliable source for state and national divorce statistics.

Thank you,

Mariana Campos Horta
Graduate Student in Sociology
Office of Population Research, Princeton University