From: Sugiyama, Alexandre B - (sugiyama)
To: Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Cc: ruggles@umn.edu
Subject: Please don"t drop times married in ACS survey
Date: Monday, May 06, 2013 5:00:48 PM

Dear Dr. Brian Harris-Kojetin,

I teach at the University of Arizona where I teach my economics undergraduate students how to analyze large public datasets. We use the IPUMS website to access Census Bureau data every semester (as well as other public surveys). I have recently received an email Steven Ruggles about the possibility that the ACS survey is planning to drop a question asking respondents the number of times they have been married and you were listed as a contact person.

I would strongly urge this question not be dropped from the ACS. I believe this question is a fundamental question that needs to be continued in order for researchers and public policy makers to understand the changing nature of American society. I have three main reasons for you.

First, marriage rates, divorce rates, and remarriage rates have significant economic impacts. The more we know how the marriages work (and don't work) the better.

Secondly, one of the aspects that I like about the ACS study is that it is large enough that it allows for the study of smaller demographic groups. For example, the sample is large enough to have large numbers relatively rare combinations of racial and ethnic participants. Thus the value of a question like remarriage becomes more valuable.

Lastly, as my students look at many public data sets that are sponsored by different federal agencies, like the national health surveys or national education surveys, I have become familiar with what questions are typically asked in a broad category of areas. The remarriage question, to my recollection, never appears. This makes the loss of this variable more important as it is so uncommon.

Please consider this email as part of the public comment on this issue.

Thank you for your time,

Alex Sugiyama
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