From: C. Matthew Snipp
To: Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Subject: ACS marriage question
Date: Monday, May 06, 2013 12:18:25 PM

Hi Brian...As you probably know, Steve Ruggles (University of Minnesota) is urging fellow ACS users to weigh in about the Census Bureau's plan to drop the "times married" from the survey (see below). I think (but I haven't checked) this item may be available from the NSFH and the NSFG but these are much smaller surveys and don't give you much resolution for smaller groups and places; not even state level geography as I recall. Losing this question would be a major loss for family demographers, and for what we know about marriage and divorce in the US. I hope the Bureau can be persuaded to retain it on the ACS.

Matt

From Steve Ruggles:

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.

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