From: Giannarelli, Linda
To: Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Subject: re: ACS marriage question
Date: Tuesday, May 07, 2013 2:57:07 PM

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin:

Hello. I'm a Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute who specializes in research related to income and benefit programs. As you can guess from the subject line of my e-mail, I'm writing today to state my support for retaining the ACS question on the number of times that someone has been married. I have both a general reason and a specific reason for believing that this variable should be retained.

The general reason is that this variable is important for our overall marriage and divorce statistics -- information that helps provide context for many analyses of family incomes, changes in family composition, etc.

The specific reason I want to "save" this variable is that its availability will contribute to my own future research using ACS data. I have always started from the "IPUMS" version of the data, which adds value to the ACS by imputing information about family inter-relationships--in particular relationships among people in subfamilies. Of course, my ideal situation would be for that additional relationship information to be added to the ACS! But since that's highly unlikely, the next-best situation is for the IPUMS researchers to have at their disposal the most information possible to inform their imputations, including the number-of-times-married variable.

Thanks for your attention.

Sincerely,
Linda

Linda Giannarelli
Urban Institute
Senior Fellow

From: IPUMS Project [mailto:ipums=umn.edu@mail123.us4.mcsv.net] **On Behalf Of** IPUMS Project
Sent: Monday, May 06, 2013 11:31 AM
Subject: ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Comments Needed by May 16!

Minnesota Population Center: Home of the IPUMS Is this email not displaying correctly? View it in your browser.

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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