From: Salvatore
To: Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Subject: ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Please Don"t.
Date: Tuesday, May 07, 2013 10:11:48 AM

Dr. Brian Harris-Kojetin:

A U.S. government employed population scientist representing only my own scientific opinion, I write to you after hearing that the U.S. Census Bureau is planning to drop the question on "number of times married" from the American Community Survey. For those 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.

Therefore, I sincerely urge you to consider that this change would significantly harm the nation's statistical infrastructure, make fact based social science harder, and play into forces preferring iron age myths over the facts and realities revealed by science and data. A recent working paper by Sheela Kennedy and Dr. Ruggles 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.

If marriage is a social institution of supposed value having federal, state and local privileges, perhaps it might be right to think that dropping this question stands in contrast with the Federal Government's disbursement of over 1,900 State benefits of marriage: Continuing to know as much as we can about this shifting social institution [marriage] is important for social research and social planning.

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. Please do whatever you can to assure that such vital questions are added not removed to the ACS. Please resist the forces that would remove data from society so that personal and group ignorance based in iron age dogmas cannot reign.

Thank you for your careful consideration, whatever your ultimate decision may be.

Sincerely,

Salvatore Labaro

-----Forwarded by Salvatore Labaro/POP/HQ/BOC on 05/07/2013 09:45AM -----

To: Salvatore
From: IPUMS Project
Sent by: "IPUMS Project"
Date: 05/06/2013 11:31AM
Subject: [MARKETING]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.

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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