From: Fomby, Paula
To: Harris-Kojetin, Brian
Subject: Number of times married question
Date: Wednesday, May 08, 2013 1:33:31 PM

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin:

I am writing to request that the Census Bureau retain the current question from the American Community Survey concerning the number of times a respondent has been married. Without this information, we are losing a nationally-representative source of information about family instability in the United States. Remarriage is not something that occurs on the fringe of US society - over 30 percent of marriages in the United States in 2010 were remarriages (http://ncfmr.bgsu.edu/pdf/family_profiles/file119796.pdf, data from the ACS). On average, remarriages are qualitatively different from first marriages in ways that influence the well-being of the adults and children in these unions. We cannot begin to understand the increasingly complex and dynamic nature of family structure in the United States without high-quality, nationally-representative data at the core of our analyses.

The loss of this information would have profound consequences for the quality of research and policy development that analysts and policy planners are able to provide. Therefore, I respectfully ask the Census Bureau to reconsider the unique information gained from asking respondents about their marital history as well as their current marital status.

Sincerely,
Paula Fomby

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