

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** PAUL RICHARD AMATO <pxa6@psu.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 16, 2013 5:40 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** American Community Survey

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I understand that the Census Bureau is planning to drop the item on "number of times married" from the ACS. As a scholar who studies marriage and divorce, I think this is a terrible decision. As you know, the quality of vital statistics data on divorce is poor, and researchers really need the ACS to fill this gap. I strongly implore you not to drop this item from the ACS.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Paul R. Amato  
Hoffman Professor of Family Sociology and Demography Pennsylvania State University

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Bosley, Tiffany <Tiffany.Bosley@ssa.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 16, 2013 2:35 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Cc:** Wade, Alice H.; Morris, M.; Bye, K. Mark  
**Subject:** FW: ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Comments Needed by May 16!

To produce the projected population by marital status in the annual OASDI Trustees Report, the Social Security Administration Office of the Chief Actuary needs the “number of times married” question from the ACS because it is important to know the divorce and widow remarriage rates.

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**From:** IPUMS Project [<mailto:ipums=umn.edu@mail335.us2.mcsv.net>] **On Behalf Of** IPUMS Project  
**Sent:** Monday, May 06, 2013 11:25 AM  
**To:** Bosley, Tiffany  
**Subject:** ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Comments Needed by May 16!

Minnesota Population Center: Home of the  
IPUMS

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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](tel:(202)395-7245) or by email at [bharrisk@omb.eop.gov](mailto: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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[Minnesota Population Center](#) | [University of Minnesota](#)

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**Our mailing address is:**

Minnesota Population Center  
225 19th Ave South  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

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Minneapolis, MN 55455

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Jennifer Bulanda <bulandjr@miamioh.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 16, 2013 10:10 AM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Concern about ACS plans

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I am writing to express my concern about the Census Bureau's plans to drop the "number of times married" question from the American Community Survey. Scholars studying family instability and family change rely on this measure to accurately examine how marital transitions may affect a number of outcomes, including health, child well-being, and economic situation. At a time when family life is changing and increasingly diverse, understanding the nature of marital transitions and their potential implications is especially important.

I realize there is always concern about keeping survey instruments succinct, but I hope the Census Bureau will reconsider its plans and retain this important question.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bulanda

Jennifer Roebuck Bulanda, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology & Gerontology  
Miami University  
356 Upham Hall  
Oxford, Ohio 45056  
[\(513\) 529-5642](tel:5135295642)  
[bulandjr@MiamiOH.edu](mailto:bulandjr@MiamiOH.edu)

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** paaapc <paaapc@crosslink.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 16, 2013 7:20 AM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Cc:** paaapc@crosslink.net  
**Subject:** comments on number of times married question from the PAA and APC  
**Attachments:** PAA APC comments on ACS number of times marriedquestionle....pdf

Dear Brian,

Please accept the attached comments from the Population Association of America/Association of Population Centers regarding the "number of times married" question on the ACS.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter.

Best,  
Mary Jo  
Mary Jo Hoeksema  
Director, Government Affairs  
Population Association of America/  
Association of Population Centers  
202-341-7283  
[paaapc@crosslink.net](mailto:paaapc@crosslink.net)

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Scott D Drewianka <sdrewian@uwm.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2013 10:48 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Comment on proposed change in the American Community Survey

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I was disappointed to learn that the Census Bureau intends to stop asking subjects in the American Community Survey how many times they have been married. The report in the Federal Register (link below) indicates that comments should be sent to you at this e-mail address:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/04/16/2013-08876/submission-for-omb-review-comment-request>

As someone who has used the ACS in several studies of family structure, I am acutely aware of the impact this change would have on researchers' ability to investigate and monitor the rapidly evolving trends in household formation and dissolution. For some time the ACS has been one of the very few annual nationwide, individual-level surveys that can be used to investigate such issues, particularly after a similar set of questions was dropped from the Current Population Survey almost 20 years ago. While the aggregated rates in the Vital Statistics data certainly have their uses, the fact that they cannot be easily disaggregated substantially reduces our ability to investigate the causes and consequences. To take a simple example, it can be quite misleading to compare population-wide divorce rates over time when there are major changes in the the age structure of the population and typical ages of first marriage, but a more relevant comparison requires the ability to observe the ages of individuals who marry, stay married, or divorce. On the other hand, while such information is typically available in smaller individual-level surveys (e.g., the Survey of Income and Program Participation), the ACS is currently the only survey large enough to establish basic patterns across the nation on an annual basis.

This data is important because marital transitions are a critical consideration for many important questions of public policy, ranging from the establishment of poverty standards, to forecasts of fertility and future population, to the design of income support program. It would thus seem particularly short-sighted to lose a primary instrument for measuring those transitions when that insight could be maintained simply by continuing a relatively simple question in a long-standing survey.

Accordingly, I urge the Census Bureau to reconsider this decision and to retain the ACS's question about times married.

Sincerely,

Prof. Scott Drewianka  
Dept. of Economics  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
[sdrewian@uwm.edu](mailto:sdrewian@uwm.edu)

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Catherine Fitch <[fitch@umn.edu](mailto:fitch@umn.edu)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2013 5:39 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** ACS - Number of Times Married

I am writing to urge the Census Bureau to keep the number of times married question on the American Community Survey. As the

I am demographer who studies family structure and marriage. The ACS is the only national-level annual survey that allows the study of marriage and divorce across many diverse subpopulations and geographies in the U.S. These data allow demographers to study key trends about marriage and divorce over time with a consistent data source. The number of times married is a key variable to understand marital history on a cross sectional survey. There are clear differences between a first marriage and subsequent marriages; without this question, trends in first marriages cannot be distinguished from remarriages.

Thank you,  
Catherine Fitch

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Catherine A. Fitch, Ph.D.  
Associate Director, Minnesota Population Center  
Co-Director, Minnesota Census Research Data Center

Email: [fitch@umn.edu](mailto:fitch@umn.edu)  
Phone: 612-626-3923

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** biancafrogner@gmail.com on behalf of Bianca Frogner <bfrogner@email.gwu.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2013 4:18 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Fwd: ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Comments Needed by May 16!

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

It has been brought to my attention that the "number times married" may be dropped from ACS. ACS is one of the very few, if not only, national surveys that is able to provide this type of detail. Many researchers who use ACS use this variable as an important variable in a model. Multiple marriages are increasingly common over time, and monitoring policies to promote marriage need this type of variable to determine whether the policies are having any impact. It also serves as an important control variable for stability in a child's family life as well as stability in one's family income levels.

Please do what you can to preserve this variable in the data. This little action can make the world of difference for a number of researchers.

Thank you for considering my request.

Bianca

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Bianca Frogner, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Health Services Management and Leadership Department  
School of Public Health and Health Services  
The George Washington University  
2175 K St. NW Suite 320  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 994-3816 (office)  
(443) 534-0210 (cell)  
[bfrogner@gwu.edu](mailto:bfrogner@gwu.edu)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** IPUMS Project <[ipums@umn.edu](mailto:ipums@umn.edu)>  
**Date:** Mon, May 6, 2013 at 11:25 AM  
**Subject:** ACS to Drop Marriage Question - Comments Needed by May 16!  
**To:** Bianca <[bfrogner@gwu.edu](mailto:bfrogner@gwu.edu)>



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](tel:(202)395-7245) or by email at [bharrisk@omb.eop.gov](mailto: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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Minneapolis, MN 55455

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Bianca Frogner, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
Health Services Management and Leadership Department  
School of Public Health and Health Services  
The George Washington University  
2175 K St. NW Suite 320  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 994-3816 (office)  
(443) 534-0210 (cell)  
[bfrogner@gwu.edu](mailto:bfrogner@gwu.edu)

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Jennifer Ball <jennifer.ball@washburn.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2013 3:31 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Don't drop "number of times married"!

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I have recently heard 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. Please do not drop this question from the ACS!

Thank you,  
Jennifer Ball

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Jennifer Ball, PhD  
Associate Professor of Economics  
Washburn University School of Business  
(785) 670-1840  
jennifer.ball@washburn.edu

"Well, I am certainly wiser than this man, who thinks he knows what he does not know, in that I am quite conscious of my ignorance. I am wiser than he to this extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know." (Plato, Apology)

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Mandy Swygart-Hobaugh <mswygart@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2013 2:08 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Do Not Eliminate ACS "Times Married" Question

Dear Dr. Brian Harris-Kojetin,

It has come to my attention that there are plans to eliminate the question “number of times married” from the American Community Survey (ACS). As recently explored in a [working paper](#) by Sheela Kennedy and Steven Ruggles, the ACS is the only reliable source currently available for national divorce statistics, based on this question that is proposed for elimination. To eliminate it would seriously compromise national divorce data and thus negatively impact future research on this extremely relevant focus of study. As such, I strongly recommend that this question not be eliminated.

Thank you for your consideration,

***Mandy Swygart-Hobaugh, M.L.S., Ph.D.***

Data Services and Sociology Librarian  
Georgia State University Library

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Carolyn Liebler <liebler@umn.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2013 2:04 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Please keep ACS question on number of times married

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I am writing to voice my objection to the plan to remove the "number of times married" question from the American Community Survey. This question is extremely important for understanding the state of our country's families. Without it, we would not be able to accurately measure the divorce rate, for example, and thus we would not be able to judge the effects of programs and policies aimed at reducing this rate. Also, we would know much less about blended families and how those family experiences differ from non-blended families. There are many more examples that I'm sure you've heard from others.

I know we want to minimize respondent burden, but this brief and simple question gives so much useful information that I do not think it makes sense to eliminate the question.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Carolyn Liebler

Carolyn Liebler, Assistant Professor  
[liebler@umn.edu](mailto:liebler@umn.edu)  
Department of Sociology and Minnesota Population Center  
University of Minnesota  
909 Social Science Tower, 267 19th Ave. S.,  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Zachary M. Schrag <zach@zacharyschrag.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 15, 2013 1:26 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Response to 78 FR 22511

Dear Mr. Harris-Kojetin,

I am writing in response to the 4/16/2013 Comment Request on proposed changes to the American Community Survey, published as 78 FR 22511. The Comment Request states that "the Number of Times Married question will be removed."

While I am not a historian of family structure, I do rely on scholars who study that subject. For example, I am currently preparing to teach a summer graduate course with Robert Self's new book, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s*, as required reading. Works like these show how knowledge of family structure helps us understand matters of enormous public concern.

As I understand it, removing the Number of Times Married question would greatly impair the ability of social scientists—and future historians—to understand trends in marriage and divorce. I hope you will withdraw this plan.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Zachary M. Schrag  
Professor of History | George Mason University zach@zacharyschrag.com | zacharyschrag.com | 703 594 1844

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Notice: The above information is for identification only; The views expressed on this account are my own and do not reflect the views of George Mason University or of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** mollymartin2126@gmail.com on behalf of Molly Martin <mam68@psu.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 14, 2013 5:16 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** American Community Survey question about the number of times married

Dear Dr. Brian Harris-Kojetin,

I recently learned that the Census Bureau is considering eliminating the question asking adults about the number of times they have been married. I honestly think this will harm our nation's understanding about the health and well-being of our society because we will lose information on two key social indicators - marriage and divorce. Because the American Community Survey (ACS) provides the only reliable source on divorce, we cannot lose this survey item.

I am a sociologist and demographer interested in family inequalities and I have a specific research interest in this ACS question. Our research team is conducting a series of studies to explore how income causally affects different social and economic experiences by leveraging an interesting and on-going natural experiment. There is a large literature showing that, over the last few decades, high-income individuals are more likely to marry and are less likely to divorce. Andrew Cherlin and others have suggested that marriage is becoming something people do after "making it" and becoming successful in their career. But the question remains: Is the link between income and marriage (or divorce) causal? One could imagine that income affects marriage, as Cherlin argues, or that marriage affects income (as various marriage promotion policies assume). Yet the association between marriage and income could be simply due to unobserved characteristics of these high-income married adults, such as the values they possess, their determination in the face of adversity, their religious devotion, social networks, or other factors.

With our research design, we will study one of the possible causal pathways. We will ask whether increasing income induces a greater likelihood of marriage and reduction in the risk of divorce. To estimate this causal effect, however, we will need multiple years of data about the number of times people have married from the ACS, including data collected in future years. Therefore, I am personally invested in the continuation of this ACS question.

I provide this specific example solely to ground the discussion, but as a family sociologist, I recognize that this question has many other important uses. Information on the number of times American adults have married helps us better understand (1) the possible social, health and financial benefits of marriage for adults *and* children, and (2) the factors predictive of marriage and divorce in our evolving social, cultural and economic environment. Important research projects with policy-relevant implications will be foregone if the ACS no longer asks about the number of times individuals have married.

Therefore, I strongly encourage the Census Bureau to forgo this original plan. It is important for the American Community Survey to ask American adults how many times they have been married.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Molly Martin

Molly A. Martin  
Associate Professor of Sociology & Demography, Penn State University  
414 Oswald Tower    T: 814.863.5508    F: 814.863.7216

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Deborah Levison <dlevison@umn.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 14, 2013 12:53 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** ACS marriage question

Dear Mr. Harris-Kojetin:

Kindly register my distress at the proposed removal of the "number of times married" question from the American Community Survey. It seems odd to drop this question when American families are growing increasingly complex due to divorce and re-marriage. Divorce and re-marriage seems to affect children substantially, so this is an indicator that matters for child-well-being, among other things. In the US at the time being, the ACS is the only reliable source for national divorce statistics. Please urge all those with influence in this matter to reconsider.

Sincerely,  
Deborah Levison  
(Economic demographer)

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Deborah Levison, Ph.D.  
Professor

Humphrey School of Public Affairs, Univ. of Minnesota  
301 - 19th Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55455 USA  
tel. 612-624-3540 fax 612-625-3513  
dlevison@umn.edu <http://www.hhh.umn.edu>  
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## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Rosenbloom, Joshua L. <jrosenbloom@ku.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 8:54 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Proposed changes to the American Communities Survey

Dear Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I recently learned of the Department of Commerce submission in the Federal Register on 4/16/2013 which details proposed changes to the American Communities Survey. This survey is an important source of social science data that is widely used by many scholars for a variety of different purposes. The proposal to remove the question about the number of times married is troubling as it will make it impossible for scholars to measure divorce rates, or construct life tables for first marriages among other things.

I would strongly urge that this proposed change not be undertaken and that the question about the number of times married be retained in the ACS.

Sincerely,  
Joshua Rosenbloom

\*\*\*\*\*

Joshua L. Rosenbloom  
Professor of Economics  
University of Kansas  
(785)-864-2839 | jrosenbloom@ku.edu

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## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** H C Shields <hchaseshields@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 8:19 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** Changes to Marriage Questions

Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I was disturbed to learn that you are considering removing the question from the census regarding number of times married. As an aspiring social scientist, I believe the US needs to lead the way in collecting reliable social statistics. I believe that it is a model for other countries and helps us understand the complex and ever-shifting world we live in in new and important ways.

Moreover, as the son of a family of family law lawyers, I understand how important these historical statistics and local statistics are to them for understanding their practice, the trends that guide their practice, and the social context in which their practice occurs.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this, I urge you to keep the question in the census.

Sincerely,

Hamilton Shields

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Susan L Brown <browns1@bgsu.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 4:50 PM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Cc:** Wendy Diane Manning  
**Subject:** ACS: Number of Times Married

We urge you to reconsider the proposal to remove the NUMBER OF TIMES MARRIED question from the American Community Survey (ACS). This question is vitally important to documenting key changes in marriage among the US population—nationally, by state, and at the local level. At the National Center for Family & Marriage Research (which is funded through a cooperative agreement with DHHS), we have used this item in our original research on changing trends in marriage and remarriage (see list of publications below). These data are unavailable elsewhere at the national, state or local level.

Without information on NUMBER OF TIMES MARRIED it is impossible to distinguish whether Americans are in their first marriage or a remarriage. We will only be able to compute the overall marriage rate which includes both first marriages and remarriages. This is problematic because the patterns of first marriage formation are distinct from those of remarriage and have implications for the well-being of children and adults. In 2010, the ACS indicates that nearly one in three marriages were remarriages. The number of times married question is also critical for studies of divorce, as we know that the risk of divorce is higher in remarriages than first marriages. For example, using ACS data, we found that the divorce rate for those ages 50 and older is 2.5 times higher for individuals in remarriages than first marriages.

Other federal data sources (such as the Census and the Current Population Survey) do not offer this measure, meaning that without this question on the ACS, we cannot establish the percentage of the population who are remarried, a first marriage rate or a remarriage rate at the national, state or local level. Nor can we differentiate between individuals and children living in a first marriage versus a remarriage.

As family life in the US becomes increasingly complex and as the rates of divorce and repartnering remain stubbornly high, it is imperative that we have a measure that captures number of times married. Stable families provide optimal health for Americans and thus it is important to have information about first marriages. Please retain the question about the NUMBER OF TIMES MARRIED on the ACS. Otherwise, basic information about marriage trends and patterns will not be calculable.

NCFMR Publications Using NUMBER OF TIMES MARRIED from ACS:

<a href="#">FP-09-03</a>	Median Age at First Marriage in the U.S., 2008
<a href="#">FP-10-01</a>	Marital Status in the U.S., 2008
<a href="#">FP-10-05</a>	Rate of First Marriage in the U.S., 2008
<a href="#">FP-10-06</a>	First Divorces in the U.S., 2008
<a href="#">FP-11-09</a>	First Divorce Rate, 2010
<a href="#">FP-11-12</a>	First Marriage Rate in the U.S., 2010
<a href="#">FP-11-13</a>	Marital Duration at Divorce, 2010
<a href="#">FP-12-14</a>	Remarriage Rate in the U.S., 2010
<a href="#">FP-12-21</a>	First Marriage vs. Remarriage in the U.S., 2010

Thank you,

Susan L. Brown & Wendy D. Manning  
Co-Directors, National Center for Family & Marriage Research  
Bowling Green State University

Bowling Green, OH 43403

=====

Susan L. Brown  
Professor of Sociology  
Co-Director, [National Center for Family and Marriage Research](#)  
239 Williams Hall  
**BGSU** | Bowling Green State University  
Bowling Green, OH 43403-0222

419-372-9521 phone  
419-372-8306 fax

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Sonia Oreffice <oreffice@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 11:44 AM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** dropping "number of times married" from ACS

Dear Dr. Harris,

I work with IPUMS US census data and ACS data for my research in applied economics, and I am concerned with the proposed drop of the question "number of times married" from ACS.

This change would significantly harm the nation's statistical infrastructure, the ability to analyze family formation and disruption for a variety of types of couples, which are very relevant questions to the US society and policymakers.

Best regards,  
Sonia

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Sonia Oreffice, PhD  
Tenured Associate Professor of Economics  
IZA Research Fellow; Co-Editor, REHO  
Department of Economics (FAE)  
Universidad de Alicante  
Campus de San Vicente  
03080 Alicante, Spain  
<https://sites.google.com/site/soniaoreffice/>

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Richard Fry <rfry276@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 11:34 AM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** comment on April 16, 2013 Commerce Dept notice

Dear Mr Harris-Kojetin,

I am writing in regard to an April 16, 2013 *Federal Register* notice. It is OMB Control Number 0607-0810. The notice announces the Commerce Department's intention to remove the Number of Times Married question from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) questionnaire. In its stead a two-part question on Health Insurance Premiums and Subsidies will be added.

I strongly oppose the removal of the Number of Time Married question from the ACS questionnaire.

Somewhere between 40 to 50 percent of first marriages end in divorce. Divorce tends to be a searing experience with significant impacts on the economic well-being and subsequent outcomes of adults. Removal of the times married question makes it impossible to distinguish between first and subsequent marriages and hence impairs our understanding of the value of marriage stability.

There is no other large American household survey that allows us to distinguish between first married and remarried Americans. The Census Bureau's occasional Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) does solicit information on marital history. It is intermittent. More importantly, it is much smaller in size so that one can not use SIPP to understand the prevalence of divorce and remarriage among smaller population groups. Removal of the times married question from the ACS will drastically hinder our ability to measure the prevalence of divorce and remarriage as well as the outcomes associated with divorce and remarriage.

In addition to adult well-being, family stability is critical to child development and the emotional, academic and social outcomes of adolescents. Without the times married question how do we know which children are raised in intact versus blended families? How do we know whether remarriage positively or negatively the household environment of children? Without the times married question we can not identify which children reside in intact versus blended families.

In short, the times married question is invaluable for understanding the prevalence and value of marital stability. Marriage and family are the key social institution in American society and I think it is vital that our taxpayer funded, nationally representative and carefully collected household surveys contribute to our understanding of the American family.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Sincerely – Rick Fry

\*\*\*\*\*

Richard Fry  
8101 Cawdor Court  
McLean, VA 22102

cell: 571-243-3469

## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Noelle A Chesley <chesley@uwm.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 11:20 AM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** ACS Number of Times Married Question

Dear Dr. Brian Harris-Kojetin:

I have recently been informed that the Census Bureau is planning to drop the question on "number of times married" from the American Community Survey. This is a critical mistake. At a time of clear economic restructuring, it is vital that we understand the influence of economic instability on families. A clear consequence of economic change is divorce--current scholarship suggests that the ACS is the only reliable source currently available for national divorce statistics.

While family scholarship is necessary to further knowledge, it is also a critical tool for policy-making. How can we best structure government services or measure the impacts of economic and social change on families without reliable measurement of divorce rates? Well, we cannot. The ACS is a critical tool for measuring a number of important economic and social outcomes. I urge you to reconsider dropping any information from this survey.

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Noelle Chesley, Ph.D.

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More Information about me and my research is available on my website:

<http://www4.uwm.edu/letsci/sociology/faculty/chesley.cfm>

My conference and published papers are downloadable from the Work Family Commons of the Work Family Researchers Network (WFRN):

<http://workfamily.sas.upenn.edu/>

You can also find me on LinkedIn and contact me via Skype (noelle.chesley).

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## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Stock, Wendy <wstock@montana.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 11:12 AM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** ACS Marriage Question

Dr. Harris-Kojetin,

I was recently informed about the plan to drop the “number of times married” question from the American Community Survey. The loss of the information gained from dropping this question would be very detrimental to research on the economics of marriage and divorce and on the economics of blended families. I encourage you to reconsider the choice to drop the question.

Sincerely,

*~Wendy*

\*\*\*\*\*

Wendy A. Stock, Ph.D.  
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## Harris-Kojetin, Brian

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**From:** Jones, Beth (VDSS) <Beth.Jones@dss.virginia.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 13, 2013 9:50 AM  
**To:** Harris-Kojetin, Brian  
**Subject:** dropping number of times married from ACS

Dr. Harris-Kojetin:

I was recently made aware of the intent to drop the question on the number of times married from the ACS. I believe that dropping this question would be a mistake as the ACS is the only reliable source for national divorce statistics. Please reconsider the change in the survey.

Beth Jones

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