

Costs vs Benefits: The 2014 Content Review of the American Community Survey

Washington Statistical Society

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United States[™]
Census
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
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Background

The 2014 ACS Content Review builds upon earlier efforts begun during the comprehensive ACS Program Review to...

- Examine and confirm the value of each ACS question
- Confirm and update the legal basis for questions
- Gather input from federal agencies and other data users
- Analyze data using pre-specified criteria established by the ACS Subcommittee of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP)
- **Develop recommendations for ACS content that will provide the most useful information with the least amount of burden to the public**

Project Scope & Phases

Scope: All questions (and subparts) currently on the 2014 ACS Questionnaire

- **Phase I** – assess full survey content and identify questions for potential removal in 2016 survey year
- **Phase II** – assess availability of other sources
- **Phase III** – research modifications to existing questions

Facts about Content Review

Who provided us with information? →

What did we examine?

- All 72 survey questions
 - 24 Housing Questions
 - 48 Person Questions
- 126 Individual Survey Components

Growth in total known uses:

- 175 to 300+

Agency

- Agriculture
- Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
- Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Census Bureau
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Education
- Energy
- Health and Human Services
- Homeland Security
- Housing and Urban Development
- Interior
- Nat'l Telecom. & Info. Administration

Agency

- Veterans Affairs
- Justice
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Transportation
- Labor
- Federal Communications Commission
- National Institutes of Health
- National Science Foundation
- Office of Management and Budget
- Social Security Administration
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Analysis Inputs – Spring-Summer 2014


Federal Inputs	Other Inputs
Letter from the acting Deputy Secretary of Commerce to federal agencies informing them of Content Review	Survey of over 1,000 Field and Call Center Representatives
Department of Commerce Office of General Counsel (OGC) Letter to agency OGCs	Website tool to collect input on questions from non-federal data users (over 900 responses)
Spring Summit with 23 federal agencies to develop understanding of purpose, process, and desired outcomes for Content Review	National Advisory Committee Content Review Working Group provided input on data use and ACS questions
Dedicated extranet site to collect input on questions from all federal agencies	

What drives our analysis?

LEGAL

- Mandatory – a federal law explicitly calls for use of decennial census or ACS data on that question
- Required – a federal law (or implementing regulation) explicitly requires the use of data and the decennial or the ACS is the historical source; or the data are needed for case law requirements imposed by the U.S. federal court system
- Programmatic – the data are needed for program planning, implementation, or evaluation and there is no explicit mandate or requirement

GEOGRAPHY



Block Group/Tract Level

Place/County/MSA Level

State/Nation Level

Examining Benefits

Mandatory Uses at –

1. Block Group/Tract Level
2. Place/County/MSA Level
3. State/Nation Level

Required Uses at –

4. Block Group/Tract Level
5. Place/County/MSA Level
6. State/Nation Level

Programmatic Uses at –

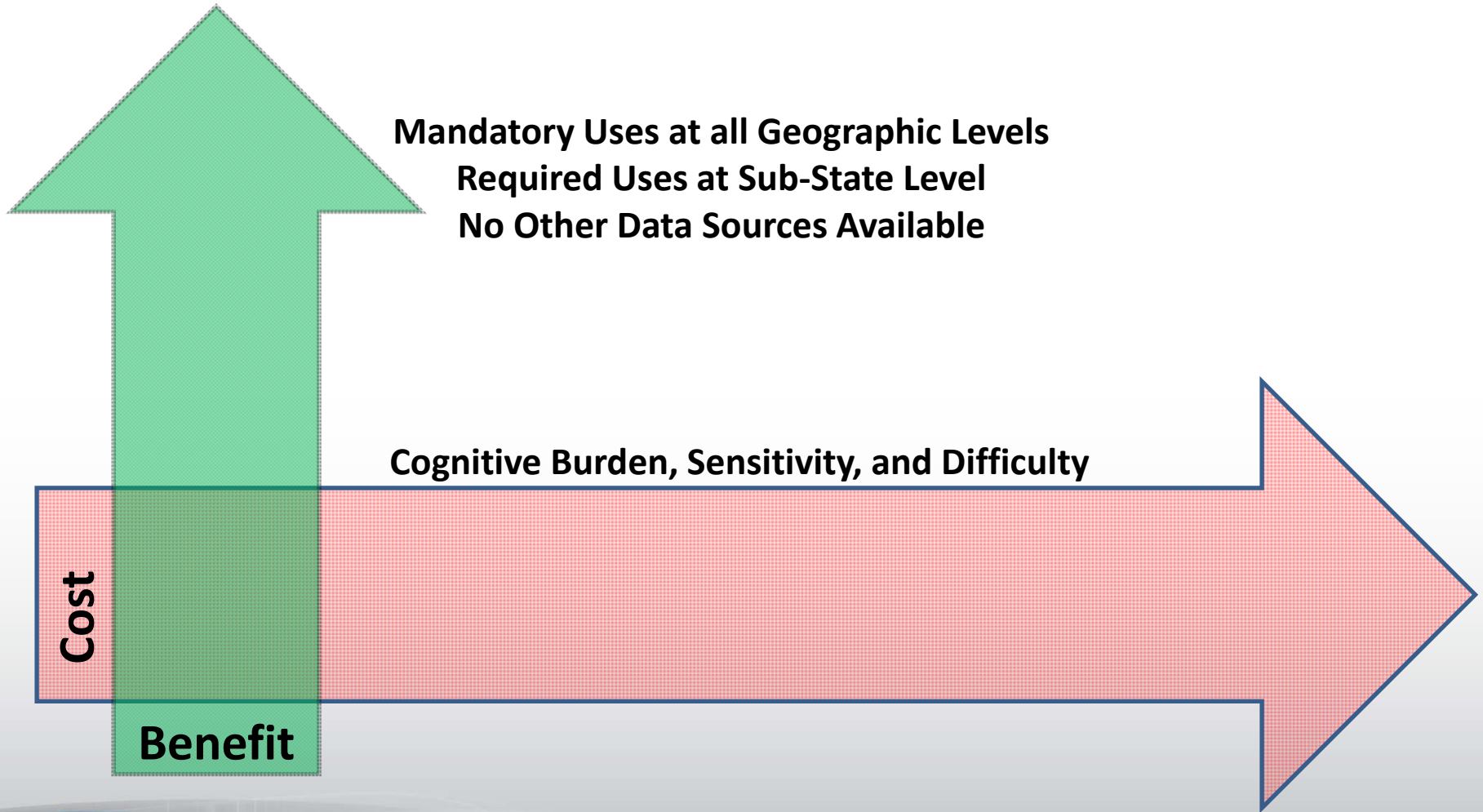
7. Block Group/Tract Level
8. Place/County/MSA Level
9. State/Nation Level

10. County-Level Interquartile Range in Values
11. Used to Select Frame for a Federal Survey
12. Other Data Sources Exist
13. Median County-Level Coefficients of Variation

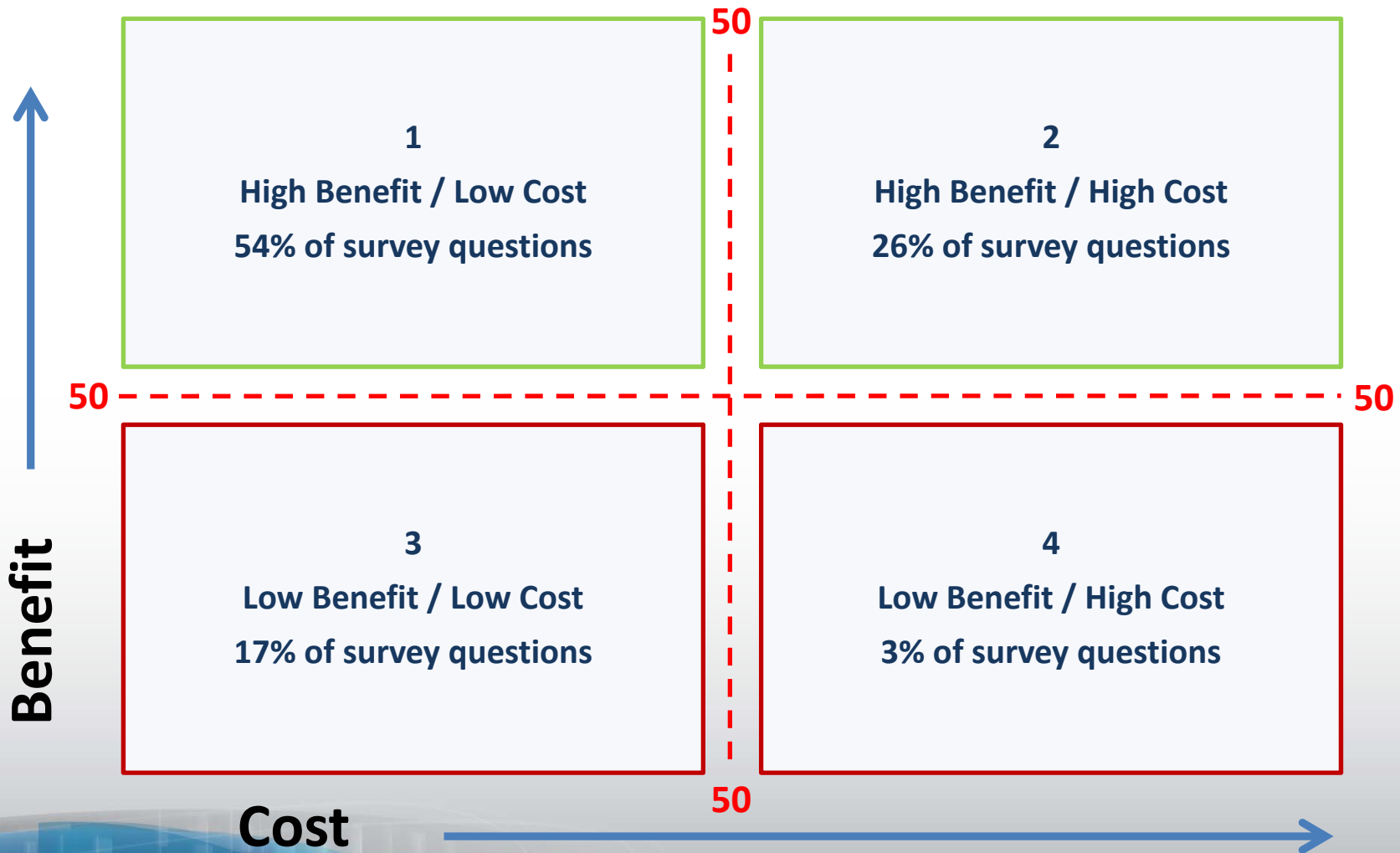
Examining Costs

1. Cognitive Burden Score
 2. Sensitivity Score
 3. Overall Difficulty Score
 4. Number of Complaints to Census Bureau HQ
 5. Median Seconds to Answer
 6. Median County-Level item Response Rate
- } Interviewer Survey

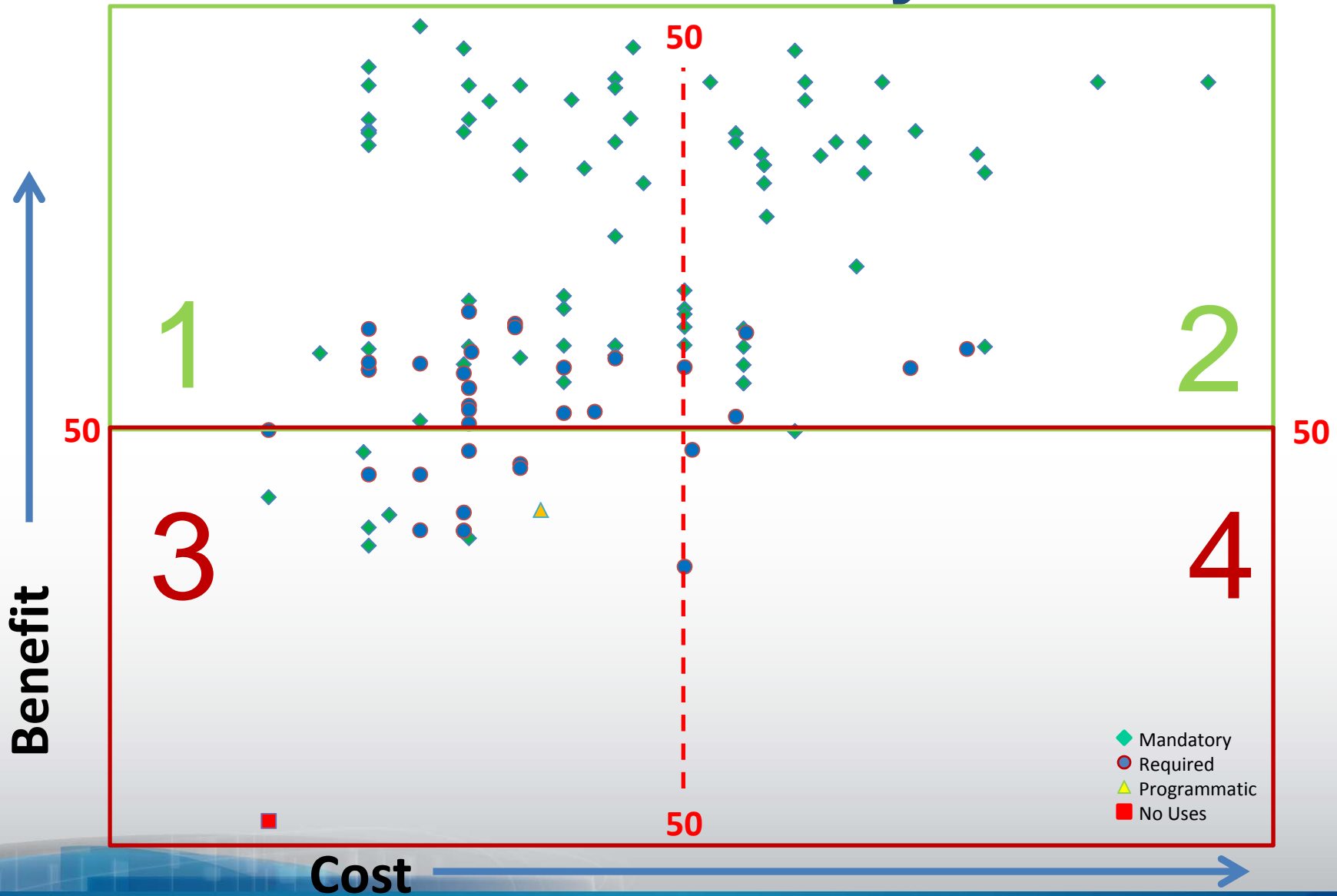
Driving Factors for Benefits and Costs



Quadrant Analysis

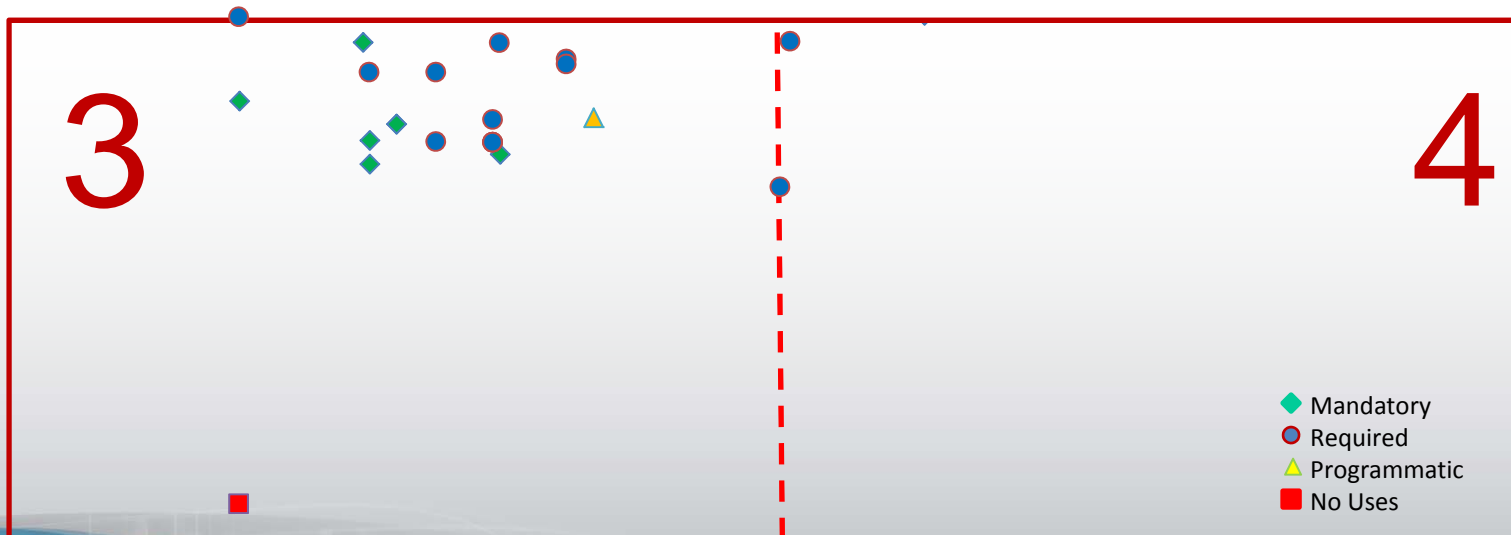


Quadrant Analysis



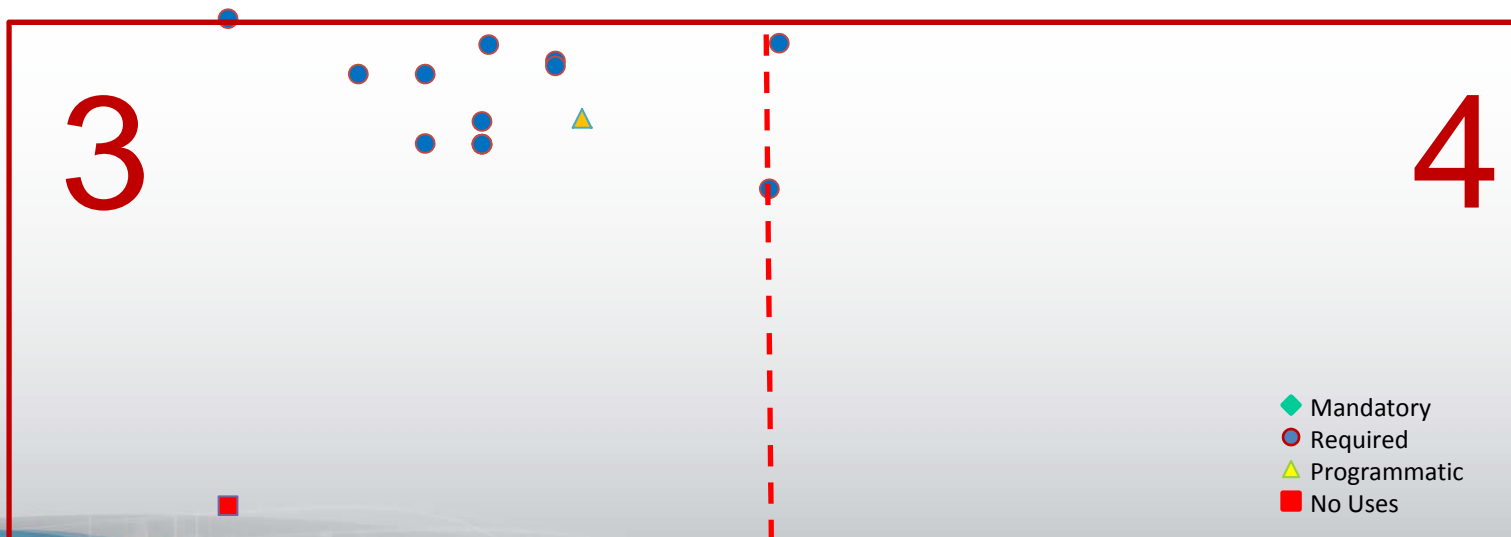
Quadrants 3 & 4 Analysis

- Begin with full array of M, R, P, and X (no uses)
- Exclude M from consideration for removal
- Exclude R with Sub-state Uses from consideration for removal



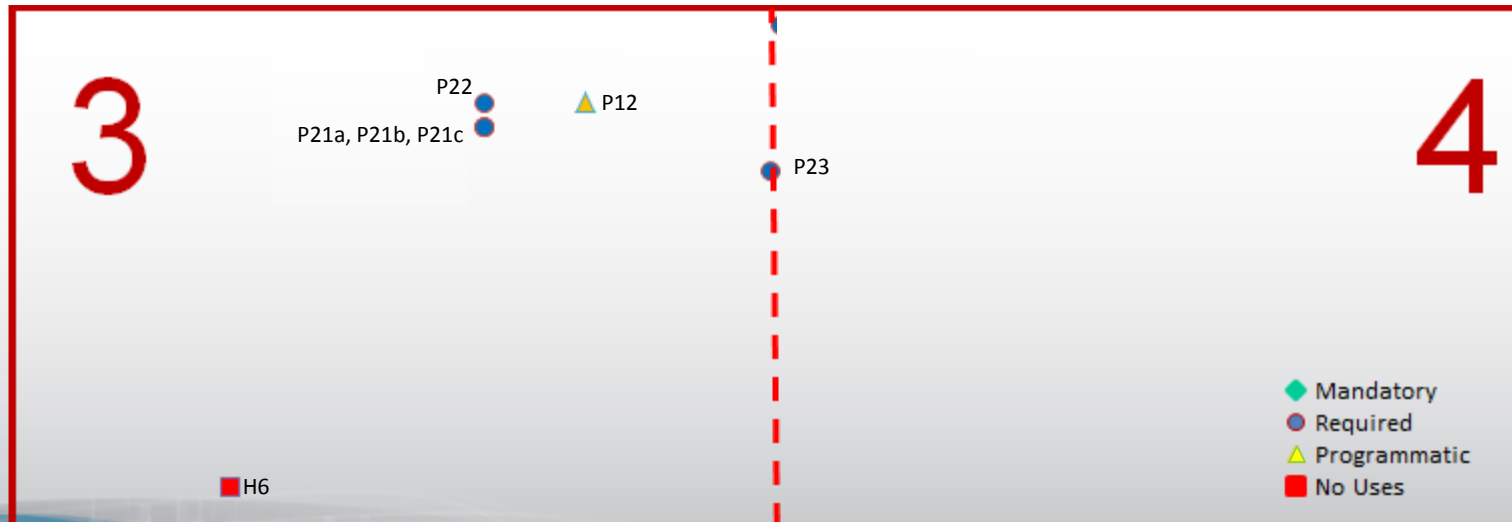
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Quadrants 3 & 4 Analysis

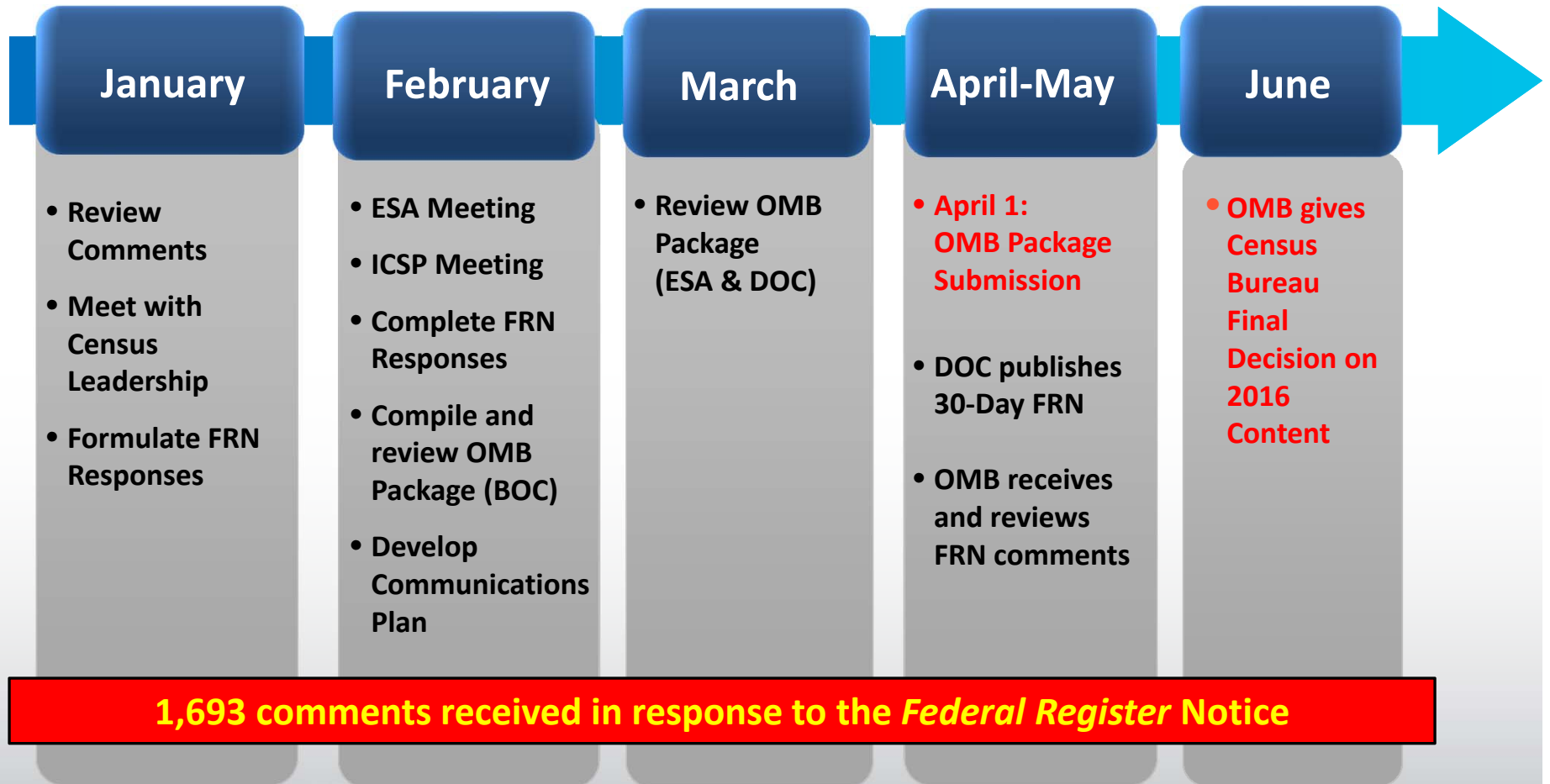
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Attributes of Candidates for Removal

Attribute	Agency Impacted/Comments	Other Agencies with Programmatic Uses
No Uses		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H6 – Business/Medical Office on Property (X) 	No current agency uses; supports comparative estimates	N/A
No M and No R Uses		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P12 – Undergraduate Field of Degree (P) 	NSF – used to target sampling frame for National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG); also supports STEM migration analyses	EPA, NTIA, HHS, DOL, DOT, EEOC
No M and No R Uses at Block Group/Tract Level or Place/County/MSA Level		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P21a – Get Married (R) P21b – Get Widowed (R) P21c – Get Divorced (R) P22 – Times Married (R) P23 – Year Last Married (R) 	SSA – State-level actuarial targeting	FCC, NSF, HHS, EEOC FCC, NSF, HHS, EEOC FCC, NSF, HHS, EEOC FCC, NSF, HHS FCC, NSF, HHS

High-level Timeline



Aggregate View of Public Comments

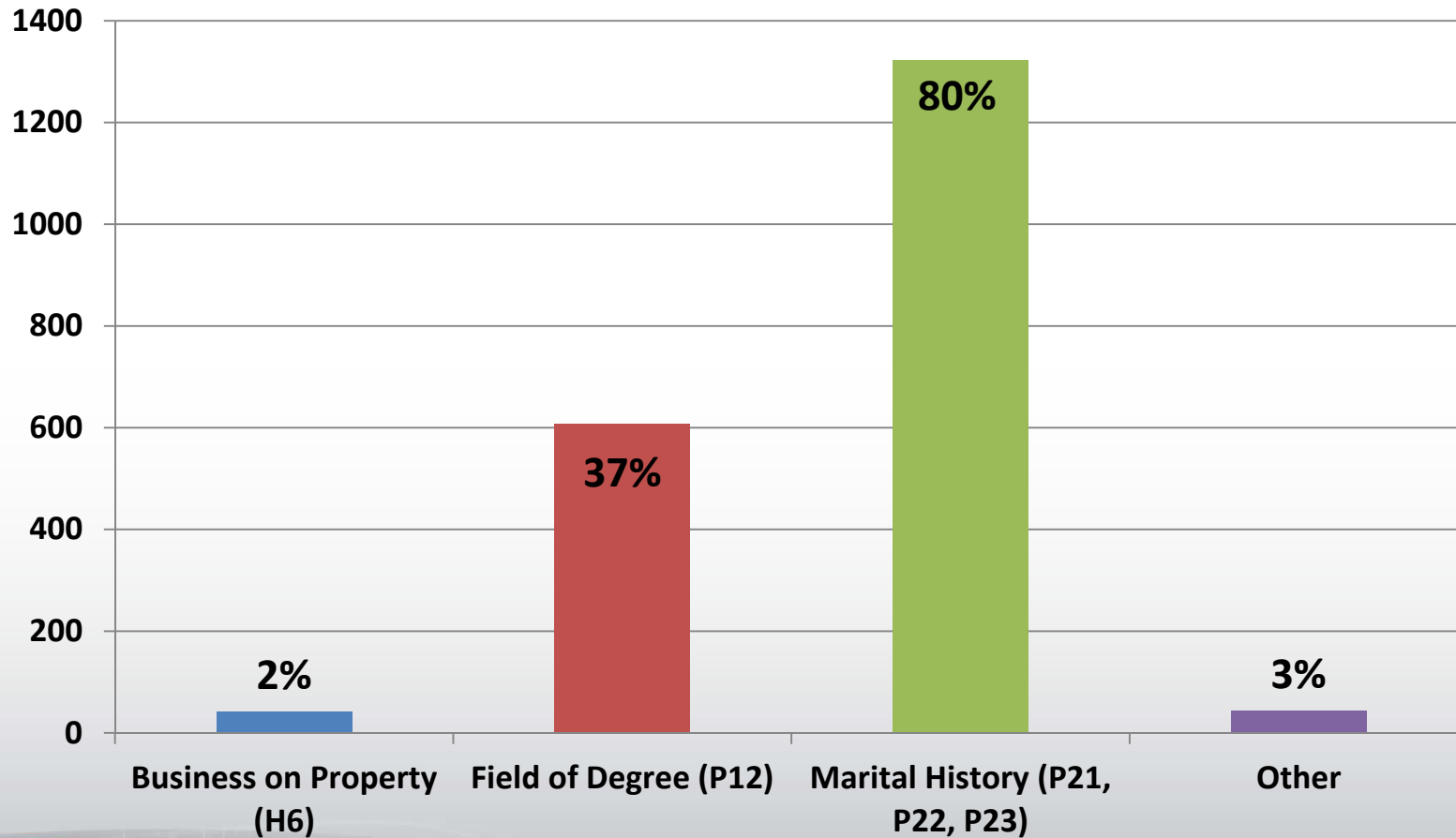
Topic	Comment	No. ¹
Survey	ACS provides important estimates, good value	207
	Other/potential ACS questions should be included on the ACS	238
	Maintain consistency of the questionnaire over time	30
Content Review	Did not consider population subgroups, non-federal uses	38
	Questions have insignificant respondent burden	35
Research	Families, marital patterns, federal program funding, and policy changes	354
	STEM (characteristics, economic outcomes, program planning)	125
	Non-STEM (characteristics, economic outcomes, program planning)	148
Other	Government agenda to attack/change/marginalize marriage	422
	Estimates are needed for the NSCG sampling frame	59
	There are no other sources for these estimates	132
	Other comments/ anecdotal comments	252

¹ Comment counts are not mutually exclusive.

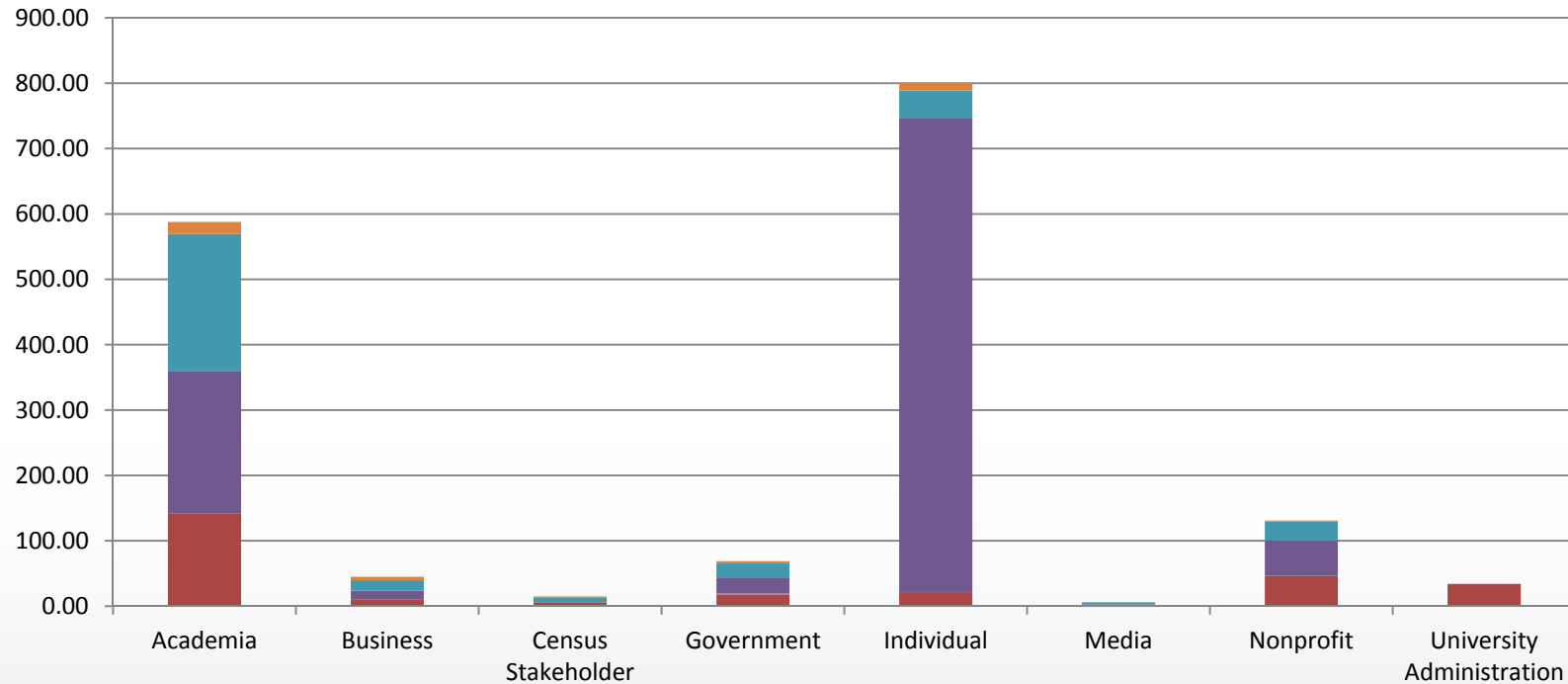
Wide Range of Commenters

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| • Congress | • Professional Associations |
| • Federal | • Nonprofits, Think-tanks, and Advocacy Groups |
| • State government | • Business |
| • City and County Government Agencies | • Media |
| • Census Stakeholders | • University researchers and administrators |
| • Private Citizens | |

Questions Mentioned

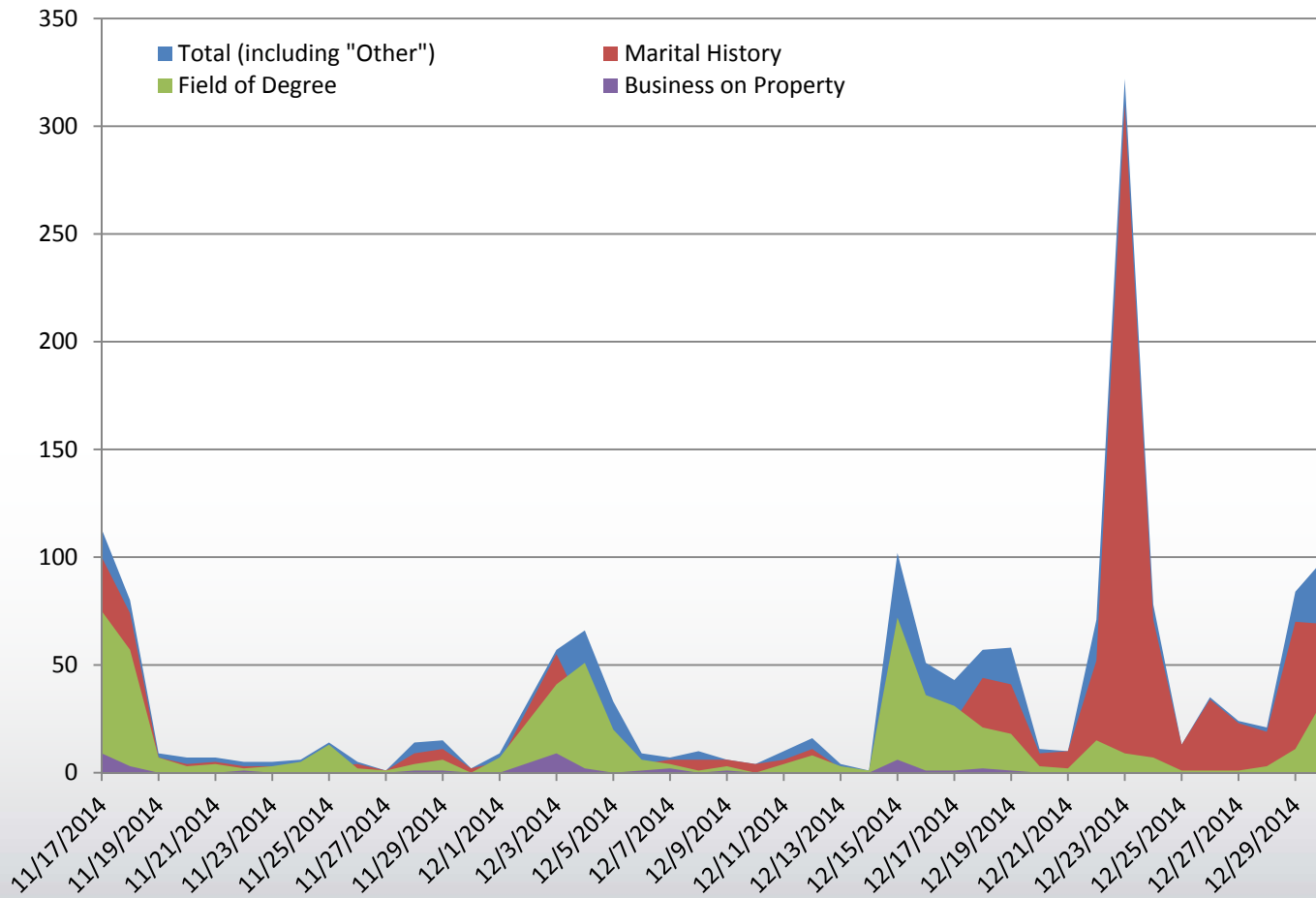


Comments by Category of Commenters

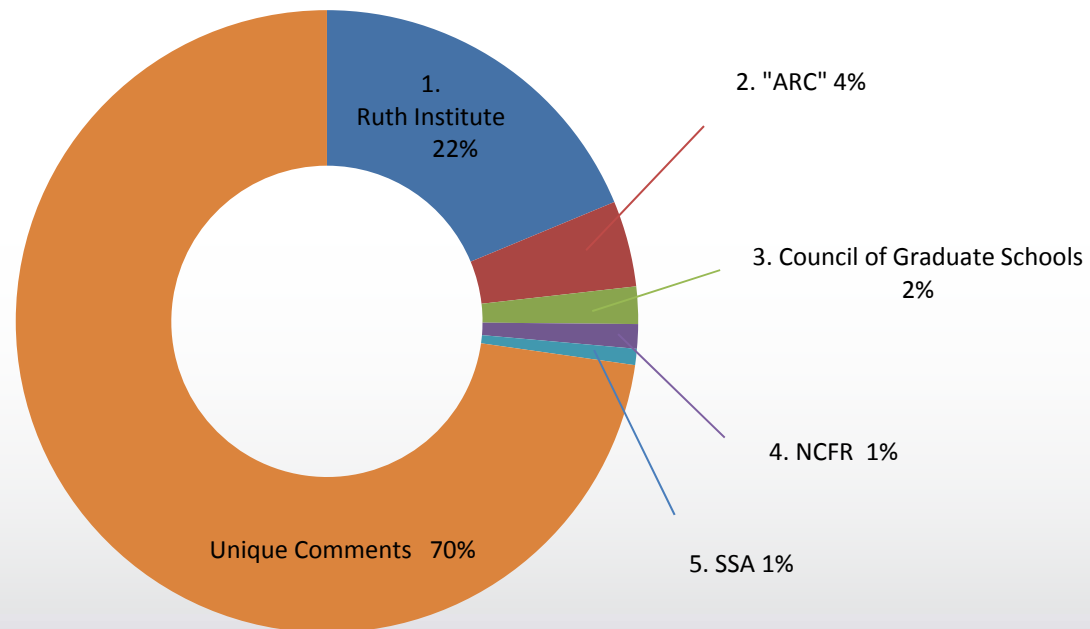


- Marital History, Field of Degree, Business on Property
- Marital History, Field of Degree
- Marital History
- Field of Degree, Business on Property
- Field of Degree
- Business on Property

Comment Trends by Date



Response Patterns



Stay Involved!

- **View the ACS Content Review Web Page and technical documentation:**

http://www.census.gov/acs/www/about_the_survey/acs_content_review/

- **Sign up for GovDelivery ACS Subscriber Notices:**

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCENSUS/subscriber/new>

- **Check back for updates on OMB clearance process**

Questions?