NLS News

No. 08-130 National Longitudinal Surveys 2008

U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Update: Data Releases and Field Efforts

The NLS project encompasses the NLSY79, the NLSY79 child/young adult, the NLSY97, and the original cohorts. Following are current interview and data-release schedules for each:

The NLSY79

The NLSY79 cohort was interviewed on an annual basis from 1979 to 1994, after which it became a biennial survey. The last time the NLSY79 survey was fielded was 2006 (the survey's 22nd round); fielding efforts for round 23 will begin in early 2008. The round-22 data set (merged with data sets from the previous rounds) is scheduled for release in spring 2008.

The NLSY79 Child/Young Adult

Since 1986, the child cohort has been fielded biennially, coinciding with the NLSY79 main youth survey years after 1994. The young adult component was added as a separate survey for older children beginning in 1994, at the same intervals as the child survey. The child/young adult cohort was last interviewed in 2006 and will be fielded next in 2008. A preliminary data set for the young adult 2006 round was released in mid-2007. The next merged child/young adult round is scheduled for release in spring 2008 and will include 1986–2006 data.

The NLSY97

The NLSY97 cohort was introduced in 1997 and has been fielded every year to date. Round 11 of the survey went to the field in October 2007. Round 10 is now out of the field, with its data set scheduled for release in late summer or early fall of 2008. The round-9 data set (merged with the first eight rounds) is currently available.

The Original Cohorts

The older men, young men, mature women, and young women surveys all began in the mid-1960s and now are inactive. The last data collection for the women took place in 2003. The older men were last interviewed in 1990, while the young men were last interviewed in 1981. Merged data sets of all rounds are available.

Obtaining Data

Public-use data from all NLS project cohorts are available free of charge through the NLS Web site, **www.bls.gov/nls**.

More than 700 Dissertations Based on the NLS

Since the 1970s, graduate students have used NLS survey project data frequently for Ph.D. dissertation topics. As of October 2007, the NLS Annotated Bibliography reports that 714 Ph.D. dissertations have been based on NLS data. According to the Bibliography, the first reported NLS-based Ph.D. dissertation was defended in 1971 by George Parsons at the Ohio State University. Parsons' topic, "An Application of John Holland's Vocational Theory to an Empirical Study of Occupational Mobility of Men Age 45 to 59," focused on the cohort of older men, part of the original cohort. Predictably, as the survey project's longitudinal data multiplied, and as new cohorts were added, the number of students using the data climbed, with a record number of dissertations, 43, reported in 1998.

Recent Ph.D. dissertation topics have varied widely and include studies on impacts of reading deficiencies on delinquency, impacts of children's disabilities on the maternal labor supply, correlations between drinking frequency and alcohol-related aggression, persistent and transitory poverty, alcohol consumption and outcomes, effects of family structure and resources on the body weight of children, adolescent health risk behavior, and women's early career goals and subsequent attainments at midlife.

The Bibliography can be accessed at **www.nlsbibliography.org** and can be searched by format to find dissertations or theses. It also can be searched by author, title, source, keyword, cohort, year, or abstract. If you used NLS data in writing your dissertation, and the dissertation is not yet listed in the database, please submit citations to your dissertation to the Bibliography. (Instructions for submissions can be found at the Web site.)

Personal Finance Variables in the NLSY Surveys

NLSY79 Finance Variables

The NLSY79 gathers comprehensive income information, including income from military pay; businesses; professional practices; partnerships; and wages, salaries, commissions, and tips. Respondents also provide information on income from unemployment, child support, government assistance (SSI, TANF/AFDC/general assistance, food stamps, WIC), educational benefits, scholarships, fellowships, grants, veterans' benefits, disability benefits, life insurance settlements, interest from bank accounts, rental properties, and inheritances or gifts. Questions about the Earned Income Tax Credit (eligibility and amount received) were asked beginning in 2000. Other tax information about exemptions and filing status has been gathered since the 1989 interview round. A total net family income variable has been created for each survey year.

Questions about assets were asked in

all survey years except 1991 and 2002. Currently, most questions about assets are asked in an every-other-survey-round rotation. Categories of assets include home ownership; savings accounts and CD's; stocks and bonds; retirement accounts; farm, business, and real-estate holdings; and vehicles. Many of these questions about assets were paired with a counterpart question about debt, such as one asking about the amount of mortgage and back taxes owed on real-estate property and the amount of money still owed on vehicles. Respondents also were asked their hypothetical net worth if all their debts were to be resolved by selling off assets.

The 2004 survey year introduced an additional series of questions regarding debt. Respondents were asked whether they had credit cards, and those who responded that they did were asked to divulge the total balance owed on all credit card accounts. They also were asked about amounts owed on student loans for themselves and for their children. In addition, they responded to questions about money owed to other businesses, such as doctor's offices, rent-to-own establishments, or banks. They answered questions about past bankruptcy as well. A wrap-up question asked about the total amount of debt they owed to other persons, institutions, or companies. Finally, respondents reported whether anyone owed them money from personal or mortgage loans.

Beginning in 1994, respondents were asked a series of questions about retirement plans associated with their jobs. Starting in 2000, they were asked about the current amount of money in their retirement accounts. In 2004, respondents also were asked about any monies they might have withdrawn from their retirement plans and that they intended to pay back. In addition, they were asked what the total value of the retirement plan would be if they did pay back the amount withdrawn. Finally, questions were asked about the portion of personal retirement account money put into each investment.

A series of questions on consumer spending will be included in the NLSY79 round-22 data set, scheduled for release in spring 2008. In this new section, respondents will answer questions about their spending patterns on common expenses, including food (expenditures at grocery stores, convenience stores, and fast-food restaurants), telephone and Internet charges, and utility costs.

Also included in the upcoming round-22 data set release will be a series of questions on attitudes toward financial risk: respondents will answer hypothetical questions about their willingness to sell assets before the value of those assets is determined.

NLSY79 Young Adult Finance Variables

Each survey year, young adult respondents were asked questions about their income, including income received from military pay, wages, salaries, commissions, tips, nonfarm businesses, partnerships, and professional practices. Questions also were asked about receiving government program assistance. A limited number of questions were included about assets and debts, such as real-estate holdings, vehicles, credit card debt, and college financial aid. Certain questions regarding assets were asked only of emancipated respondents. The pool of emancipated respondents includes all respondents 18 years and older and any respondent under 18 years who has a child or who reports a spouse or live-in partner. Also included are respondents under 18 years who are living away from both parents.

Beginning in the 2000 survey year, respondents were asked a short series of questions about the degree of financial strain their household was facing, including how often the household put off buying something necessary, the level of difficulty the household had in paying bills, and whether there was any money left over at the end of each month.

NLSY97 Finance Variables

As in the NLSY79 survey, NLSY97 respondents provide calendar-year information on income from wages and salaries and on self-employment income, as well as on income from other sources, such as child support, interest payments, dividend payments, rental properties, inheritances, and government assistance. These data are available for every survey year since 1997.

The NLSY97 assets section is administered to respondents on the basis of their birth year cohort. Asset/debt questions are asked after the respondents' 18th and 20th birthdays. In round 9, questions about assets were asked to those born in 1980. Asset variables include ownership of a business, stock, vehicles, household furnishings, pension or retirement accounts, and bank accounts.

Questions about such ownership cover whether or not the NLSY97 respondent shares the asset with a spouse or partner, as well as the value of the asset. Respondents were asked about renting or owning their dwellings, with renters asked about rent and utilities and owners asked about details such as value of the residence, improvements made, home equity loans, property taxes, and the average cost of utilities. Questions about debt include those asking about educational loans (data for which are collected in tandem with college enrollment data), the mortgage questions described earlier, and questions regarding other debts to institutions and to family and friends. Round 9 included questions about making loan payments on time and about bankruptcy. Respondents who are unable to provide exact dollar figures are asked to respond in self-defined or predefined ranges.

Variables created to collect data on assets include CV_ASSETS_DEBTS_20 and CV_ASSETS_DEBTS_25, which calculate the respondent's overall debt (not including any house payments) at ages 20 and 25, respectively. CV_HOUSE_DEBT_20 and CV_HOUSE_DEBT_25 provide the total amount owed on the respondent's primary housing at ages 20 and 25, respectively. Two additional variables (refer to CVC_HH_NET_WORTH_20 and CVC_HH_NET_WORTH_25) provide the respondent's household net worth at the two ages. Other variables yield data on the respondent's household income and poverty status.

In round 1, information on income and assets also was gathered from a parent of the respondent.

Accessing NLSY Finance Variables

Personal finance variables can be accessed by type of cohort through the NLS Web Investigator, available at **www.nlsinfo.org/web-investigator**. Use the "area of interest" search option to search "Income" or "Assets and Debts." □

Cohabitation Data in the NLSY79

The NLSY79 offers respondent data on domestic cohabitation status (living with an unmarried partner in a marriage-like relationship), with some data appearing in the 1979–2000 interviews and more detailed information collected in 2002 and 2004. The 2002–04 surveys provide a more complete record of cohabitation spells that may have occurred in between interview periods or during periods when the respondent was married.

Historical cohabitation data

From 1979 to 2000, cohabitation information was collected only on partners currently living with respondents. For survey years 1979–81, users can check the relationship variables from the household enumeration/roster for partners reported there.

Beginning in 1982 and continuing through survey year 2000, specific questions probing the respondent about partners were added to the questionnaire. If respondents did not specifically report a partner on the household enumeration/roster, but did report an unrelated adult in the household, they were asked if they currently lived with a partner. If so, the line number of the partner on the household enumeration/roster was recorded.

In survey years 1990–2000, respondents also were asked for the date the cohabitation with the current partner first began and whether the respondent and partner had lived together continuously since that date.

Users should note that, in the 1979–98 surveys, the term "partner" was defined explicitly as "opposite-sex adult." In 2000, this limitation was removed, expanding the definition of "partner" by default to include same-sex partners. However, respondents already had been free to give "partner" as the relationship of a same-sex household member during all previous years of the household enumeration. As regards spouses, respondents were asked whether they and their spouse had lived together before marriage and, if so, whether they lived together continuously until they were married.

Expanded cohabitation data

Beginning in 2002, respondents were asked detailed questions about their cohabitation experiences during any unmarried spell lasting 3 months or longer. First, respondents were asked about their marital status and whether it had changed since the date of the last interview. During this part of the interview, an internal function in the software detected any gaps in regard to which the respondent did not report being married. If any unmarried gap lasting 3 or more months was identified, respondents were asked whether they had ever lived with anyone as a domestic partner for 3 or more months since the last interview (question number R70987.00). If respondents answered affirmatively, they were then asked specifically about each such unmarried gap.

For each unmarried gap, respondents were asked the following series of questions: First, they were reminded of the marital status they reported with regard to the gap, and they were asked whether they lived with someone as a domestic partner during that period (R70992.00). If they answered in the affirmative, they were requested to provide information regarding the date on which they began cohabiting (R70994.00, R70994.01) and whether they cohabited with that partner continuously until the current interview date (R70998.00). If they responded that the cohabitation was not continuous, they were asked to provide the date they stopped cohabiting with the partner during the specific gap (R71000.00, R71000.01). After these questions were answered, the dates were compared. If the unaccounted-for remainder of the specific gap was 3 or more months, the respondent was asked whether he or she lived with any other partner during the gap of 3 or more months (R71003.00). If the answer was "yes," the questions were repeated with regard to the next partner during that gap. (See R71004.00-R71004.01, R71005.000, and R71006.00-71006.01.) This entire series of questions was then repeated for each eligible unmarried gap of 3 or more months.

Users should be aware that although the variables look similar, questions R70987.00 and R70992.00 are not the same question. As described in the paragraph before last, question R70987.00 asks respondents whose answers exhibit one or more eligible unmarried gaps whether they ever lived with anyone for 3 or more months as a domestic partner since the last interview. Only if the answer to this question is "yes" are respondents then asked questions about each specific eligible gap, beginning with question R70992.00. In another caveat, respondents' answers may exhibit unmarried gaps, but the respondents may not report on them if they lasted less than 3 months. Finally, it is possible for respondents to report that they currently are living with a partner, but not be asked about the duration of the cohabitation, if the current unmarried gap has lasted less than 3 months as of the date of the interview. Information on this spell of cohabitation would be collected at the next interview if the unmarried gap turned out to last longer than 3 months.

Many users find it helpful to access the spouse/partner identifier variables introduced in 2000. These pairs of variables, "Number of Spouse/Partners Reported" and "Relationship Code of Current Spouse/Partner," together provide information about the respondent's relationship status and whether the identity or status of a spouse/partner has changed from one interview date to the next. (See R06471.04 and R06471.05 as examples.) Based on the household record data, spouse/partner identifier variables have been constructed for all survey years.

The NLSY79 young adult cohort offers both a cohabitation status variable and an "ever cohabited" variable for each survey year. Beginning and ending dates, as well as data on various demographic characteristics of the partner, are collected for all spells of marriage or cohabitation reported by the young adult respondent. In addition, all questions asked of current spouses of the young adult respondent—including questions about employment, the quality of the relationship, the household division of labor, previous marriages, and children from other relationships—are asked about current cohabiting partners.

Cohabitation Variables in other NLS Surveys

In the NLSY97 data, cohabitating partners are treated in the same manner as spouses; therefore, an extensive amount of data exists on cohabitation. For example, month-by-month cohabitation (and marital) status variables are available for respondents since age 16, as are variables providing characteristics of cohabitating partners. Users have the ability to link cohabitating partners across interviews.

For the original cohorts, cohabitation

status can be determined from household record variables in the young women and mature women surveys beginning in 1977, the young men survey beginning in 1978, and the older men survey starting in 1980. □

Frequently Asked Questions

The NLS staff encourages researchers to contact NLS User Services with questions and problems encountered while accessing and using NLS data or documentation. Every effort is made to answer these inquiries. Following are some recent questions and answers that may be of general interest to NLS users:

Q1. My NLSY79 research includes using a height variable in calculating BMI (body mass index). For 1981, the height variable R04816.00 is a single three-digit number. Could you please explain that number?

A1. Height questions for NLSY79 respondents were asked in 1981, 1982, 1983 (only to females who were ever pregnant), and 1985. For 1981 only, the height variable combines feet and inches into a single number. Hence, in 1981, the responses range from 400 (4 feet, 0 inches) to 611 (6 feet, 11 inches). In 1982 and 1985, the height variable converts all answers to inches only. The 1983 height questions are found under two different reference numbers: female height, in feet, is provided in R09989, with the remaining inches provided in R09990.

Q2. In the NLSY79 Child Survey, how do I determine the educational level of a child's mother?

A2. There is more than one way to get the educational level of the mother. Users can go directly to the child/young adult data set and find the variables for the mother's highest grade completed. (See "Family Background" area of interest.) Alternatively, variables for highest grade completed in the main NLSY79 data set could be extracted and merged with variables in a child data set.

Variables that indicate the education level of the spouse/partner of the mother of each child can be found within the child/young adult data set by looking in the "Maternal Household Composition" area of interest. All young adults (in their first-time young adult interview) also are asked about their father's educational attainment.

Q3. Is it possible in the NLSY97 to figure out how many Hispanic respondents were born in the United States and how many were foreign born?

A3. The NLSY97 data set contains a 2001 variable that asks whether or not the respondent was born outside the United States, its territories, or Puerto Rico. (See variable R58214.00.) By "cross-tabbing" this variable with R05386.00 (KEY!ETHNICITY), users can determine the number of Hispanic respondents (for those interviewed in 2001) born outside the United States.

Q4. I am interested in using the NLSY97 to track changes in a respondent's religious affiliation, but am having difficulty locating the religious preference variables for each year. Are these variables available in this cohort?

A4. The respondent's religious preference was asked in rounds 1 and 9 (R00021 and S55328, respectively), but not in other years. Variables providing information on the respondent's religious activity (how often during the previous year a respondent attended a worship service) are available in rounds 4–7. □

Completed NLS Research

The following is a listing of recent research based on data from the NLS cohorts that has not appeared in its current form in a previous issue of the *NLS News* (see the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* at **www.nlsbibliography.org** for a comprehensive listing of NLS-related research):

Addison, John T., and Surfield, Christopher J. "Atypical Work and Pay." *Southern Economic Journal* 73,4 (April 2007): 1038–1065. [NLSY79]

Ahituv, Avner, and Lerman, Robert I. "How Do Marital Status, Work Effort, and Wage Rates Interact?" *Demography* 44,3 (August 2007): 623–647. [NLSY79]

Billger, Sherrilyn M. "Does Attending Predominately-Female Schools Make a Difference? Labor Market Outcomes for Women." *Journal of Economics and Finance* 31,2 (Summer 2007): 166–185. [NLSY79]

Blozis, Shelley A., Conger, Katherine J., and Harring, Jeffrey R. "Nonlinear latent curve models for multivariate longitudinal data." *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 31, 4 (2007): 340–346. [Children of the NLSY79]

Chang, Jen Jen. "Maternal Depressive Symptoms, Father's Involvement, and the Trajectories of Child Problem Behaviors in a U.S. National Sample." *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 161,7 (July 2007): 697–703. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Chapple, Constance L., and Johnson, Katherine A. "Gender Differences in Impulsivity." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 5,3 (2007): 221–234. [Children of the NLSY79]

Cubbins, Lisa A., and Klepinger, Daniel H. "Childhood Family, Ethnicity, and Drug Use Over the Life Course." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69,3 (August 2007): 810–830. [NLSY79]

Deary, Ian J., Irwing, Paul, Der, Geoff, and Bates, Timothy C. "Brother-Sister Differences in the g Factor in Intelligence: Analysis of Full, Opposite-Sex Siblings from the NLSY1979." *Intelligence* 35,5 (September–October 2007): 451–456. [NLSY79]

Gee, Gilbert C., Pavalko, Eliza K., and Long, J. Scott. "Age, Cohort and Perceived Age Discrimination: Using the Life Course to Assess Self-Reported Age Discrimination." *Social Forces* 86,1 (September 2007): 265–290. [Mature Women, Young Women]

Glauber, Rebecca. "Marriage and the Motherhood Wage Penalty Among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69,4 (November 2007): 951–961. [NLSY79]

Goosby, Bridget J. "Poverty Duration, Maternal Psychological Resources, and Adolescent Socioemotional Outcomes." *Journal of Family Issues* 28, 8 (August 2007)

1113–1134. [Children of the NLSY79]

Grimm, Kevin J. “Multivariate Longitudinal Methods for Studying Developmental Relationships between Depression and Academic Achievement.” *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 31,4 (July 2007): 328–339. [Children of the NLSY79]

Huang, Chien-Chung, and Han, Wen-Jui. “Child Support Enforcement and Sexual Activity of Male Adolescents.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69,3 (August 2007): 69–72. [NLSY97]

Johnson, Katherine A., and Tyler, Kimberly A. “Adolescent Sexual Onset: An Intergenerational Analysis.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 36,7 (October 2007): 939–949. [NLSY97]

Light, Audrey L., and Nandi, Alita. “Identifying Race and Ethnicity in the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.” *Population Research and Policy Review* 26,2 (April 2007): 125–144. [NLSY79]

McCartan, Lisa M., and Gunnison, Elaine. “Examining the Origins and Influence of Low Self-Control.” *Journal of Crime and Justice* 30,1 (2007): 35–62. [Children of the NLSY79]

Meyer, Christine Siegwarth, and Mukerjee, Swati. “Investigating Dual Labor Market Theory for Women.” *Eastern Economic Journal* 33,3 (Summer 2007): 301–316. [NLSY79]

Pandey, Shanta, Zhan, Min, and Kim, Youngmi. “Bachelor’s Degree for Women with Children: A Promising Pathway to Poverty Reduction.” *Equal Opportunities International*, 25,7 (2006): 488–505. [NLSY79]

Rodgers, Joseph Lee, and Wanstrom, Linda. “Identification of a Flynn Effect in the NLSY: Moving from the Center to the Boundaries.” *Intelligence* 35,2 (March–April 2007): 187–196. [Children of the NLSY79]

Rotolo, Thomas. “Effects of Children and Employment Status on the Volunteer Work of American Women.” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 36,3 (September 2007): 487–503. [Young Women]

Salsberry, Pamela J., and Reagan, Patricia B. “Taking the Long View: The Prenatal Environment and Early Adolescent Overweight.” *Research in Nursing and Health* 30,3 (June 2007): 297–307. [Children of the NLSY79]

Schoenberg, Uta. “Wage Growth Due to Human Capital Accumulation and Job Search: A Comparison between the United States and Germany.” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 60,4 (July 2007): 562–586. [NLSY79]

Sheran, Michelle. “Career and Family Choices of Women: A Dynamic Analysis of Labor Force Participation, Schooling, Marriage, and Fertility Decisions.” *Review of Economic Dynamics* 10,3 (July 2007): 367–399. [NLSY79]

Weden, Margaret M., and Kimbro, Rachel Tolbert. “Racial and Ethnic Differences in the Timing of First Marriage and Smoking Cessation.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69,3 (August 2007): 878–887. [NLSY79]

Wichman, Aaron L., Rodgers, Joseph Lee, and MacCallum, Robert C. “Birth Order Has No Effect on Intelligence: A Reply and Extension of Previous Findings.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 33,9 (September 2007): 1195–1200. [Children of the NLSY79]

Zagorsky, Jay L. “Do You Have to Be Smart to Be Rich? The Impact of IQ on Wealth, Income and Financial Distress.” *Intelligence* 35,5 (September–October 2007): 489–501. [NLSY79] ☐

Are You Working With NLS Data?

If you are, we are interested in your work!

- Have you received funding to sponsor a project using NLS data?
- Are you working on a paper that uses NLS data?
- Have you published a recent paper using NLS data?

If you have received funding on a project, are working on a paper, or published a recent paper that uses NLS data, please contact NLS User Services, Center for Human Resource Research, The Ohio State University, 921 Chatham Lane, Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43221; (614) 442-7366; e-mail: **usersvc@chrr.osu.edu**. Or use our online submission form—just go to **www.nlsbibliography.org** and click on “Submit Citation.” ☐

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NLS News

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