



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

Early Release for 2004 NLSY79 Young Adult Data

Researchers now can access a preliminary version of the 2004 young adult data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), available as a download or through the NLS Web Investigator interface. This release includes all data collected for young adults interviewed in the 2004 data collection round, as well as a limited number of created variables. Because the release is preliminary, it does not include data from any of the data collection rounds before 2004. However, the new data easily can be linked to the final 2002 child/young adult data release, as well as to the most recent NLSY79 data release. The final 2004 child/young adult data set, including all previous data, is scheduled to be available by spring of 2006. Users are reminded that the reference numbers assigned to variables on the preliminary release will not match the reference numbers on the final release.

The 2004 survey round is the sixth wave of young adult data. In 2004, interviews were completed with 5,024 young adult respondents. Since 1994, NLSY79 children aged 15 and older have no longer been given cognitive and other assessments like those given to their younger counterparts. Instead, they have participated in a computer-assisted personal or telephone interview on work experience, military experience, schooling, training, family background, health, fertility, income and assets, dating and relationships, attitudes, and drug and alcohol use.

In 1994 and 1996, the young adult samples included all children who turned 15 and older during the survey year. The young adult sample in 1998 was limited to those turning 15 to 20 during the survey

year. In 2000, the sample again included young adults turning 15 and older during the survey year; however, interviews for approximately 40 percent of the young adults between 15 and 20 years old from the black and Hispanic or Latino oversample families were not fielded in 2000 for budgetary reasons. The young adults not interviewed in 2000 were again eligible to be interviewed in 2002 and 2004. For the 2002 and 2004 fieldings, there also were no sample restrictions for age. The primary interview mode in 2004 was telephone, with a small portion of interviews completed in person.

Researchers interested in downloading the 2004 NLSY79 young adult preliminary release free of charge should visit www.bls.gov/nls and choose the NLS public-use link under "Obtaining NLS Data." By following the link to the "NLS Product Availability Center," researchers can either download this data release or access the data through NLS Web Investigator, also available at this site. Documentation on the NLSY79 child/young adult surveys can be found on the same Web site. For more information, feel free to contact User Services. (See the back of this newsletter for contact information.) □

New NLSY97 ASVAB Summary Score Now Available

Interested in Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) data? The recently released NLSY97 round 7 data set includes a summary percentile score created by NLS program staff. Similar to the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score familiar to experienced NLSY79 users, the new summary score combines

scores on the math and verbal subtests of ASVAB.

Background: How the ASVAB was administered

During round 1 of the NLSY97, most respondents participated in the administration of the computer-adaptive form of the ASVAB. A total of 7,127 NLSY97 respondents (or 79.3 percent of the NLSY97 sample) completed this test, 5,452 (80.8 percent) of the cross-sectional sample and 1,675 (74.9 percent) of the supplemental sample. When they took the test, most respondents were between the ages of 12 and 17.

The ASVAB consists of 10 power and 2 timed subtests that measure vocational aptitude in the following areas:

- Arithmetic reasoning
- Assembling objects
- Auto information
- Coding speed
- Electronics information
- General science
- Mathematics knowledge
- Mechanical comprehension
- Numerical operations
- Paragraph comprehension
- Shop (industrial arts) information
- Word knowledge

The 10 power subtests were administered using a computer adaptive testing (CAT) procedure that matches the difficulty level of the individual test items to the ability levels of the respondents. At the beginning of each test, the procedure selects an item of comparable difficulty for all respondents. After the respondent answers the first item, the program computes a provisional estimate of ability taking into account the respondent's answer to the item.

The next item is selected based on the provisional estimate. After the administration of each subsequent item, the provisional estimate of ability is updated, and the process continues until the respondent has answered a fixed number of questions.

Adaptive testing procedures require fewer items—and thus less testing time—than conventional tests to obtain ability estimates of comparable precision. However, because respondents do not answer the same set of items, conventional scores such as number or percent correct cannot be used to compare their performance. Instead, the program computes an item response theoretic (IRT) estimate of ability that summarizes each respondent's overall performance on the subtest. These scores are computed on a comparable scale and can be compared across respondents, with a lower score indicating poorer performance and a higher score indicating better performance.

The two timed tests in the CAT-ASVAB, coding speed and numerical operations, were administered in a traditional (nonadaptive) format, in which all respondents answered the same items in the same order. The final ability estimate for these subtests is a rate score based on the proportion of correct responses, corrected for guessing, divided by the mean screen presentation time for the items. The rate score provides a measure of the speed and accuracy of responding.

In addition to the test results, the data include a number of variables reporting respondents' answers to the online questionnaire questions. These questions, mostly asked after the respondent had completed the test, collected information about the respondent's background and the testing conditions. Respondents first answered questions about school experiences, such as highest grade completed and highest degree attained, average grades during last year of school, subjects taken, and the quality of teaching in science and shop classes. Variables about respondents' backgrounds included ethnicity, primary language, and whether parents worked for pay during the respondent's childhood. Finally, questions related to the ASVAB administration indicated whether the respondent had taken the test before, whether he or she had served in the military, the extent of the respondent's prior computer use, the

main reasons the respondent took the test, and whether the respondent did as well as possible. Respondents also were asked to evaluate the comfort and noise level of the test-taking environment and to state whether the test's instructions were clear.

New summary percentile score variable

In addition to the final ability estimates for the various subtests, the data set now includes a summary variable for respondents' scores on four key math and verbal subtests. This summary percentile score variable, created by NLS staff, is similar to the AFQT score available in the NLSY79 data set.

This variable was created as follows: NLS staff first grouped respondents into 3-month age groups, with the oldest age group consisting of those born between January and March of 1980, the next age group born between April and June of 1980, and so forth. Custom sampling weights were computed for the sample of 7,093 respondents who have scores on all four tests, and these custom weights were assigned for each respondent's scores. Within each 3-month age group and using the custom sampling weights, NLS staff assigned percentiles for the theta scores for the tests on mathematical knowledge (MK), arithmetic reasoning (AR), word knowledge (WK), and paragraph comprehension (PC) based on the weighted number of respondents scoring below each score. Percentile scores for WK and PC were added to get an aggregate Verbal score (V) for which an aggregated intragroup, internally normed percentile was then computed. The percentile scores for MK, AR, and 2 times the aggregated percentile for V were then summed. Finally, within each group NLS staff computed a percentile score, using the weights, on this aggregate score, yielding a final value between 0 and 99.

Users should note that, although the formula is similar to the AFQT score generated by the Department of Defense for the NLSY79 cohort, this variable reflects work done by NLS program staff and is neither generated nor endorsed by the Department of Defense.

The question name for the new summary variable is `ASVAB_MATH_VERBAL_SCORE_PCT`. Researchers in-

terested in using this score can access the data by downloading the round 7 data file from the NLS program Web site (www.bls.gov/nls) or by using the online Web Investigator. Additional technical information about the creation of the summary score is available from NLS User Services. □

Interviewer Remarks: Beyond What the Respondent Says

As researchers know, a respondent's attitude, limitations, physical environment, and social surroundings sometimes can influence responses to survey questions. The NLS surveys provide several "interviewer remarks" variables in which interviewers provide subjective descriptions of the respondent and his/her surroundings. These interviewer comments, generally recorded immediately following an interview, can provide valuable supplemental information about the quality of an interview.

Interviewer remarks in the NLSY97

In rounds 1 through 7 (the most recently released round), NLSY97 interviewers have reported their perceptions about respondents on the following measures: How informative or cooperative respondents are; their ability to understand questions; any special circumstances (for example, hard of hearing, unable to see well, illness/injury); and how candid or honest the respondents were. Interviewers also recorded who else was present during the respondent's interview and where the interview was conducted (inside or outside home, in car, and the like). In some rounds, interviewers provided information on the respondent's housing unit and surroundings, with a description of the interior and exterior of the home, the type of neighborhood, and how safe the area was.

Starting in round 2, selected rounds included additional questions regarding the fielding process and the interview itself, such as whether there were any problems conducting the interview, the number of calls and/or visits needed to gain cooperation, and whether or not the interviewer had completed the prior round interview.

The NLSY97 data include additional interviewer-related variables from adminis-

trative records, including interviewer characteristics and summaries of the fielding process.

Interviewer remarks in the NLSY79

All released rounds (rounds 1 through 20) of the NLSY79 contain the following interviewer-provided variables: respondent's attitude toward the interview (friendly, cooperative, impatient, hostile); respondent's level of understanding (good, fair, poor); whether anyone else was present during the interview; and in what language the interview was conducted. There also were variables providing interview details such as number of calls made and the day of the week, the date, and the time of day of the interview. In 1989 a variable was added that asked whether there were any special respondent characteristics that could affect the interview circumstances. This was expanded in 1998 to include specific characteristics—for example, deaf, blind, poor English, or physical handicap.

With the advent of the computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) in 1993, interviewers were asked whether using a computer caused any differences between a respondent's attitude toward the 1993 survey and the prior survey.

Besides interviewer comments about the respondent, the NLSY79 also provides information each survey year about the interviewers, including race, sex, age, education level, years of experience, and their first and second other languages (if they speak more than English).

Interviewer remarks in the NLSY79 child surveys

In the NLSY79 child surveys, interviewer remarks are described more accurately as interviewer assessments, since interviewers provide detailed information on the testing (assessment) environment and the behavior of the child during the interview. Starting with the first survey round in 1986, interviewers have reported on the child's rapport, perseverance, cooperation, motivation/interest, and any problems with vision or hearing. The interviewer rates the child's shyness or anxiety and reports any significant distractions during the interview, how many other people were present, and their potential impact on the child's performance. The interviewer also indicates the location of the child interview

and the language in which it was conducted. These testing conditions, labeled as such in the 1988-2004 variable titles, can be found in the Child Supplement areas of interest. (In the 1986 survey, these items do not have the phrase "testing conditions" in their titles; see variables CS863131-CS863153.)

Interviewers also provide a separate set of remarks for any assessment that may have been interrupted or prematurely terminated, indicating the reason for the event. These assessment-specific remarks also are found in the Child Supplement areas of interest and are documented with titles that contain the name of each assessment and either the term "terminated" or "termination."

Interviewer remarks in the NLSY79 young adult surveys

A core series of interviewer remarks similar to those found in the NLSY79 main survey was featured in all six rounds of the young adult data sets and included the respondent's general attitude, understanding of questions, special characteristics, and the presence of others during the interview.

Interviewer remarks in the original cohorts

Variables detailing interviewer remarks can be found in more recent data sets of the mature women, young women, and older men cohorts.

For the women's surveys, a series of interviewer remarks was collected from 1995 (the first CAPI year) through 2003 (the final year of the women's surveys). As with the NLSY79 and NLSY97, this series included questions about a respondent's attitude, understanding, special characteristics, and the presence of others during the interview. In addition, the interviewers rated the respondents' alertness and ability to remember details. In 2003, the interviewers also were asked to report whether there were any signs of children present or any apparent time restraints on the respondent. In the mature women cohort, there also were a few interviewer-directed questions in 1967 (the initial collection year) assessing whether additional people present during the interview had influenced a respondent's answers.

For the older men, a similar series of interviewer remarks was included in the 1990

interview, the last year the men were interviewed.

Accessing interviewer remarks

To access interviewer remarks, go to NLS Web Investigator at www.bls.gov/nls, select the cohort of choice under "General Overviews," and follow the Investigator link. Once logged onto Web Investigator, choose "Interviewer Remarks" as the area of interest. □

Field Efforts: Who's Being Interviewed When

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

The NLSY79: The NLSY79 cohort was interviewed on an annual basis until 1994, when the survey became biennial. The last time the NLSY79 survey was fielded was 2004 (the survey's 21st round); it next heads to the field in 2006. The data set for the 2004 round is scheduled for release in 2006.

The NLSY79 child/young adult: Since 1986, the child cohort has been fielded biennially in the NLSY79 main youth survey years. The young adult component was added as a separate survey for older children beginning in 1994 at the same intervals. The child/young adult cohort was last interviewed in 2004 and will next be fielded in 2006. A preliminary data set for the 2004 young adult round was released in mid-2005 (see related article in this newsletter).

The NLSY97: The NLSY97 cohort has been fielded every year to date. Round 9 of the survey heads to the field in late 2005. Round 8 is now out of the field, with the round 8 data set scheduled for release in the middle of 2006. Round 7 main-file data are currently available to the public.

The original cohorts: The older men, young men, mature women, and young women surveys all began in the mid-1960s and now are inactive surveys. The last col-

lections of data for the women took place in 2003. The older men were last interviewed in 1990, while the young men were last interviewed in 1981. □

Original Cohort Geographic Variables Available for Research Use

Additional geographic information for the four NLS original cohorts (the older men, young men, mature women, and young women) now is available for research use at the U.S. Census Bureau's Research Data Centers.

The Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) State and county codes for each interview and the primary sampling unit for the original samples now are available on a restricted basis for all four of the original cohorts. In addition, for mature women and young women, the latitude and longitude of residence at the time of the interview are available, as well as a "quality of match" variable created to provide researchers with an accuracy indicator for the address data. Also accessible are the six-digit identification codes created by the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE) for postsecondary schools attended by the women cohorts.

Under Title 13, researchers are required to obtain special clearance for these restricted data by submitting an application to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This proposal is reviewed primarily for its scientific integrity, its potential benefit, and proposed data outputs. If approved by BLS, the Census Bureau also reviews the proposal. Once final permission is granted, researchers will access the data within the confines of a Research Data Center (RDC), a secure site designed to safeguard non-public-use data confidentiality. Currently, there are eight RDCs throughout the United States, including Washington, DC; Cambridge, MA; Los Angeles, CA; Berkeley, CA; Ithaca, NY; Chicago, IL; Ann Arbor, MI; and Durham, NC. A ninth RDC will be opening in New York City very shortly.

Researchers can obtain further details on the original cohort geocode application process by accessing www.bls.gov/nls/origcohortgeo.htm. For more information about Research Data Centers, go to

www.ces.census.gov/ces.php/rdc. □

Frequently Asked Questions

Researchers are encouraged to contact NLS User Services with questions and problems they have encountered while accessing and using NLS data and/or documentation. Every effort is made to answer these inquiries. Some recently asked questions that may be of general interest to NLS users are listed below with their answers.

Q1. Do the work history areas of interest in the NLSY79 cohort contain information on spouse's work history?

A1. So far there has not been an attempt to collect spouse's employment in an event-history format similar to that for the respondent, which allows the creation of the work history variables. The marital section in earlier questionnaires and the spouse labor information section in later years do contain some questions about spouse's employment (these questions tend to be like those found in the Current Population Survey). The childcare section in some years also has a few questions about spouse employment that may or may not be suited to your purposes.

Q2. Is there a variable in the NLSY97 data that identifies number of siblings?

A2. There is not a specific variable that gives the number of siblings a respondent has. Instead, you will need to create this by using variables from the "Roster Items" area of interest. You need to use the relationship variables to count the number of siblings, making sure to count those that reside in the household (see variables HHI_REL.YX) and not in the household (NONHHI_REL.YX). There may be some undercounting in cases where the respondent's mother had a child after the respondent moved out.

Q3. Can you explain why there are 938 valid skips for CV_INCOME_GROSS_YR in round 1 of the NLSY97?

A3. In round 1, income data were collected from independent youths in the youth questionnaire and from the parents in the parent

questionnaire. If a youth was not independent and his/her parent did not answer the parent questionnaire, these data would validly be missing for this variable.

Q4. I have five cases that I cannot figure out in the NLSY97. On the rosters, there is a child's birth date, but on the created variables, they have no children's birth dates listed. Why is that?

A4. The created variables are for biological children only. The respondents in question have adopted children.

Q5. Is there an easy way to gather a list of the created young adult variables available? Are there any young adult created variables similar to the main NLSY79 and NLSY97?

A5. The NLSY79 young adult cohort has a less extensive set of created variables than does the main NLSY79. Most of the created variables available for the young adult are contained in the "Common/Key Variables" area of interest and the "Geocode" area of interest (for those who have acquired the Geocode CD). Created variables include current marital and cohabitation status for each survey round, date of first marriage, date of first cohabitation, year of last interview, flags for number of young adult interviews and child assessment years, cleaned up versions of residence for each survey round, age at first birth, and a reconciled birth history with year-specific residence variables.

Chapter 3 of the *Child and Young Adult Data Users Guide* contains information about the young adult surveys and includes a discussion of which created variables are available. The latest version of the guide can be accessed through the documentation area of the Web Investigator at www.bls.gov/nls (follow the "Children and Young Adults" link under the "General Overview" section to find Investigator). o

Completed NLS Research

The following is a list 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*. Researchers can visit the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* online at www.nlsbibliography.org

for a comprehensive listing of NLS-related research.

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