



U.S. Department of Labor  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

### NLSY97 Round 3 Data Release

The main file round 3 NLSY97 CD-ROM is now available for distribution to researchers. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 cohort includes 8,984 respondents aged 12 to 16 as of December 31, 1996. In round 3, 8,209 sample members (91.4 percent) were interviewed. Surveyed respondents included 6,173 members (91.5 percent) of the cross-sectional sample and 2,036 members (91.1 percent) of the supplemental sample of black and Hispanic youths.

This article briefly describes the survey instruments used for the round 3 interview. It then discusses youth survey content and provides information about the data and documentation available to researchers.

#### Round 3 survey instruments

The round 3 youth questionnaire, the main source of data in this round, was very similar in structure and content to the round 2 instrument. The questionnaire asked each NLSY97 youth about a variety of topics, including education, employment, health, marriage, fertility, income, assets, and program participation. The youth questionnaire also included an extensive self-administered section that collected information about substance use, relationships, and criminal activity.

The household income update, an instrument first included in round 2, also was administered in round 3. If the respondent lived with his or her parents, one of the youth's parents was asked to complete this one-page questionnaire. The household income update gathered basic income information about the responding parent and his or her spouse or partner.

The round 3 data collection effort included two special surveys: A school survey and a transcript survey. The school

survey data are described in detail in the *NLSY97 User's Guide*. Due to confidentiality restrictions, access to the school survey data is limited; interested researchers should contact BLS for more information. The 2000 NLSY97 transcript survey sought high school transcripts for all respondents who either had graduated from high school or were aged 18 or older and no longer enrolled in high school. Transcripts were received for 1,417 of the 1,623 eligible respondents (87.3 percent). Based on these transcripts, survey staff constructed a series of variables describing each respondent's high school experience. Data from the transcript survey will be available on the round 3 Event History CD-ROM, scheduled for release in August.

The remainder of this article focuses on the youth questionnaire from round 3. Unless otherwise noted, readers should assume that all references to "instrument" or "questionnaire" refer to the youth interview.

#### Round 3 questionnaire content

The round 3 youth questionnaire was similar to the round 2 instrument, with very few changes. The questionnaire began with a household information section, in which the respondents provided information about their parents and the members of their household. This section also asked the youth to report residential moves since the last interview.

The school-to-work transition is a major focus of the NLSY97 survey. To gather information about this transition, the round 3 questionnaire asked questions about the youth's education and employment that were similar to those asked in rounds 1 and 2. The schooling section collected data about each K-12 school and each college the respondent had attended since the last interview. Next, the employment questions asked for detailed information about each

employee-type job held by the youth since the last interview. Respondents also described freelance jobs, such as babysitting or lawn work, and any self-employment in that period. Finally, questions were added to the military series in the employment section. In addition to recording the respondent's branch of the Armed Forces, military occupations, and current pay grade, new questions asked about the youth's past pay grades while serving in the military.

To round out the school-to-work information, the round 3 questionnaire contained training and time-use sections. Respondents aged 16 and older answered questions about training programs other than regular schooling in which they had participated since the last interview. Then, respondents aged 16 and older who were not enrolled and not employed provided information about how they spent a typical day.

The round 3 NLSY97 collected detailed information about a number of other characteristics that may influence a youth's educational and employment opportunities and experiences. In a lengthy self-administered section, respondents answered questions about their relationships with their parents, dating and sexual experiences, and attitudes about themselves. Several groups of questions gathered data on the frequency of the respondent's use of alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Lastly, respondents reported various criminal and delinquent behaviors, as well as contact with the criminal justice system.

Marriage and fertility experiences may have an important influence on adult outcomes, so the round 3 survey contained a number of questions on these issues. Respondents detailed changes in their marital and cohabitation status since the last interview, and they also listed characteristics of their spouses or partners. In the section on

fertility, questions asked not only about the respondent's children but also about the characteristics of the other parent of each child.

Finally, the round 3 NLSY97 questionnaire closed with sections on the youth's income, assets, and participation in government assistance programs for the economically disadvantaged. These questions, similar to those asked in each previous round, will help researchers to examine changes in respondents' financial status over time.

### **NLSY97 data and documentation**

The NLSY97 main file data are available to researchers on a CD-ROM. In addition to the data, each CD-ROM contains documentation and search and retrieval software. The NLSY97 CD includes the data collected in the round 3 survey, as well as a number of created variables. This file contains all data and created variables from rounds 1 and 2, so researchers can easily examine the longitudinal record of a respondent. The round 1 data also include information from the parent questionnaire and from the screener, household roster, and nonresident roster questionnaire, two instruments administered only during the initial survey.

Supplemental documents, such as questionnaires and interviewer reference manuals, are distributed with each CD-ROM. Also available to researchers at no cost is the 2001 edition of the *NLSY97 User's Guide*. This guide explains the selection of the NLSY97 sample, describes the contents of the data set, and provides helpful information for researchers using the data. The 2001 edition updates the previous guide with information about the round 3 survey and includes new information on how to use this complex data set effectively.

Researchers interested in purchasing the main file data, the *NLSY97 User's Guide*, or any accompanying documentation should contact NLS User Services. (See the back of this newsletter for contact information.)

### **Income Data in the NLSY97**

The NLSY97 interview collects detailed income information from respondents. Many respondents were fairly young during the first several rounds of the survey,

so data also have been gathered from the parents of the respondents. This allows researchers to build a more complete picture of the respondent's financial situation. This article first reviews the income information pertaining directly to the youth respondent and his or her spouse or partner. Next, questions about the income of the youth's parents and other household members over age 14 are described. Finally, the article explains the topcoding system used to protect respondents' confidentiality and briefly reviews related variables in the NLSY97 data set.

Income data in the NLSY97 touch on several different subjects and come from several sources. Subjects covered include the youth's income from wages and salary and other sources, the responding parent's own income, and the income of other household members. Sources of the data include the youth interview in each round, the round 1 parent interview, and the household income update. The household income update is a brief paper questionnaire administered beginning in round 2 to a parent of any respondent still living at home.

Researchers should be aware that not all NLSY97 respondents are eligible to answer all income questions. Further, even eligible respondents are sometimes missing income data from supplementary sources such as the parent interview or the household income update. Table 1 shows the universe of respondents eligible to be asked questions on each type of information described in this article. The actual number of respondents who have valid data for a given item may be lower than the eligible number in the table due to nonreceipt of a given type of income or to nonresponse. The survey attempts to minimize the effects of nonresponse by asking respondents to choose a range from a predetermined list for any income amount that the respondent does not know or refuses to provide.

#### **Income of the NLSY97 respondent and spouse or partner**

The extent of income information collected in the NLSY97 depends on the characteristics of the respondent. All respondents provide very basic information about their income in the previous calendar year. More detailed questions are asked only of independent respondents. Independent respon-

dents are those who meet at least one of the following conditions: Are aged 18 or older, have had a child, are enrolled in a 4-year college, have ever been married or are in a marriage-like relationship at the time of the survey, are no longer enrolled in school, or are not living with any parents or parent-figures.

In each round, all respondents provide information about their wage and salary income in the previous calendar year. The surveys instruct the respondent to include income from odd jobs, temporary or seasonal work, and military positions, as well as income from a regular job. In addition, the questionnaire asks about the amount of money received as an allowance during the past calendar year and how often the allowance was received.

Respondents who are classified as independent answer a much more detailed set of questions about income in the past calendar year. In addition to wages or salary and allowances, independent respondents report their own income from a farm, business, or professional practice. If the respondent is married or living with a partner, he or she then provides same information for the spouse or partner.

Respondents next report their income from a variety of other sources; if they have a spouse or partner, they state the combined income received from each source. Questions are asked about each of the following types of income:

- child support
- interest from investments
- dividends
- rental income
- estates, trusts, annuities, or inheritances
- other sources such as Social Security, pensions, alimony, veterans benefits, or life insurance payments

Independent youths also are asked questions about parental transfers in the past year. Aside from allowances and parental loans, respondents are asked to state the amount of money they received from each parent or guardian. Additionally, independent round 1 respondents were asked if they had made regular payments to their parents during the previous year. If these respondents had lived at home at any time during that year, this survey collected information on the amount they paid for room and board.

Finally, the respondents state whether

they or their spouses or partners filed for an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) on their Federal income tax return for the past calendar year.

In round 1, information about the youth respondent's income also was gathered during the parent interview. If a parent interview was conducted, the responding parent stated the amount of income that the youth respondent received from wages or salary in 1996. The parent then reported the amount of money given to the respondent in that year and the amount received from the respondent for room and board or other regular payments. These questions permit comparison of the information provided by the youth respondents with that provided by their parents.

**Parent and household income**

Information is available from each survey round about the income of the respondent's parents and other household members over age 14. These data, along with the respondent-specific information described above, are then aggregated into a created variable by survey staff.

*Parent income.* Information about parental income is available from three sources: The round 1 parent interview; the household income update, administered to a resident parent or parent-figure of the youth in rounds 2 and 3; and the youth questionnaire, administered in each round.

The most detailed information is available from the round 1 parent interview. In this survey, the responding parent reported his or her earnings in 1996 from a job—including military service—and from

a farm, business, or professional practice. Similar data were collected for the current spouse or partner. The survey then asked about income received in 1996 by the parent and spouse or partner combined. Separate questions collected data about interest or dividend income, including any amount that had been reinvested or credited; child support payments; and other income. Finally, data were collected on amounts received by the parent and spouse or partner from various government programs in 1996.

In rounds 2 and 3, the household income update was filled out by parents of respondents still living at home. This short paper instrument collected the following data concerning the income of the parent and his or her spouse or partner:

- the parent's total pretax income from wages, salaries, commissions, and tips during the past calendar year
- the same data for the parent's spouse or partner
- the total pretax amount of any other income received by either person (for example, farm or business income, inheritances, child support, or government programs)

During the main youth interview, NLSY97 youth respondents also provide information about their parents' income. In rounds 1 and 2, respondents who were at least aged 14 by the end of the previous calendar year answered these questions; in round 3, all respondents were 14 or older, so all respondents were eligible to be asked these questions. The youth was asked for each parent's total income from a job,

farm, business, or professional partnership in the previous calendar year. This information, along with the parent's responses to the parent questionnaire and household income update, may allow researchers to compare a youth's perception of parental income with the amount the parent reports.

*Household income.* Researchers may want to consider not only the income of the respondent and his or her parents, but also the income of others living in the household. To provide a better picture of the household's financial resources, the surveys gather information about the income of household members aged 14 and older.

In the round 1 survey, the responding parent stated the 1996 earnings (self-employment earnings and earnings from an employee job) of each household member older than 14 at the time of the survey. Another question determined the income that each household member had received from any other sources such as Social Security, pensions, welfare, interest, gifts, and so forth. In each subsequent survey round, independent youth respondents are asked about the income of all other individuals aged 14 or older who currently reside in the household.

Survey staff use these data to create variables for eligible respondents that report the total household income received in the calendar year before each survey. In round 1, this variable, question name CV\_INCOME\_GROSS\_YR, used information provided by the responding parent or by independent youth respondents. In subsequent rounds, total household income is available for independent youth respon-

**Table 1. Respondent universes for NLSY97 income questions**

Type of Information	Universe	Number of Eligible Respondents		
		Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Wages and salary	All respondents	8,984	8,386	8,209
Respondent's and spouse's or partner's other income	Independent <sup>1</sup> respondents	429	1,835	5,104
Respondent report of parent income	Respondents aged 14 and older	5,486	6,864	8,209
Parent report of income	Respondents with completed parent interview (round 1) or household income update (rounds 2 and 3)	7,942	7,601	5,488

<sup>1</sup> Independent respondents are those who are aged 18 or older, have had a child, are enrolled in a 4-year college, have ever been married or are in a marriage-like relationship at the time of the survey, are no longer enrolled in school, or are not living with any parents or parent-figures.

dents. Sources combined to create the income variable are non-farm and farm wages, the wages of the respondent's spouse or partner, child support, interest and dividends from stocks or mutual funds, rental income, alimony, retirement pension or Social Security payments, parents' income if the respondent resides with them, monetary gifts (other than allowance) from parents, public support sources, and other income. A second variable, question name CV\_HH\_POV\_RATIO, creates a poverty status ratio comparing total household income and household size to the Federal poverty level for the previous year.

### Topcoding

Because the NLSY97 is a public use data set distributed widely throughout the research and public policy communities, the survey takes extensive measures to protect the confidentiality of respondents. One aspect of assuring confidentiality is the "topcoding" of the highest income values. In each survey round, the top 2 percent of reported values for some variables are topcoded, or converted to one set value. This "topcoded" value is calculated separately for each variable by averaging all the values that exceed the limit for that variable. Calculating topcoded values in this way allows statistics such as means to accurately reflect the status of the population under examination without violating respondent privacy.

NLSY97 variables that usually are topcoded are items such as wage and salary income, other income, income from investments, parents' income, and similar variables that may have a wide range of values. Variables that typically have fairly low maximum values, such as income received from government assistance programs, do not need to be topcoded. Users can identify topcoded variables by examining the codebook for the variable of interest; the codebook pages for these variables contain notes explaining the topcoding process. As with any variables, however, researchers should extract and examine the actual data rather than relying on codebook information for analysis.

### Related variables and more information

In addition to the income data described above, NLSY97 respondents—and their responding parents in round 1—provide de-

tailed information about other financial characteristics. To examine youth respondents' earnings on an individual job, researchers can use the wage information collected in the employer section of the instrument or the created hourly-rate-of-pay variables for each job. The assets section of the youth questionnaire asks the youth respondent to state whether he or she holds various types of assets and the value of each. This section also asks about debts owed by the respondent. The program participation section of the questionnaire gathers details about the respondent's receipt of assistance from government programs for the economically disadvantaged. Additionally, program participation is summarized in a series of created variables available on the event history CD-ROM. The assets and program participation sections are limited to respondents who are classified as independent, and additional restrictions may apply.

In round 1, these data are supplemented with information provided by the responding parent. The parent questionnaire included a variety of questions about the parent's asset holdings and debts owed. The parent also reported whether he or she had received government assistance within the past 5 years, although amounts were not recorded.

Researchers interested in these data should review the questionnaires and codebooks to ensure that the data collected are appropriate for the analysis that will be conducted. The data described in this article are collected in the income section of each youth questionnaire and the household income update, a separate paper instrument. Round 1 parent data were gathered in sections P5 and PC10 of the parent questionnaire. Most income data are contained in either the income or the parent retrospective area of interest on the NLSY97 CD-ROM.

Information about the income, assets, and program participation questions is provided in the *NLSY97 User's Guide*. The methods used to create the summary variables are described in the *NLSY97 Codebook Supplement*. Both documents are available from NLS User Services. (See the back of this newsletter for contact information.) In addition, issue 102 of the *NLS News*, found online at <http://stats.bls.gov/nlsnews.htm>, contains detailed information about the asset data.

## The Young Adult Survey

Since 1986, children of female respondents in the NLSY79 cohort have participated in their own survey administration every other year. This child survey includes several cognitive, socioemotional, and psychological assessments; questions about the child's health and schooling; and a self-administered questionnaire about the attitudes and behaviors of children aged 10 and older.

As the oldest of these children navigate the transition from school to work and into adulthood, another survey collects information about their employment, education, and family formation. The NLSY79 "Young Adult" survey provides researchers with information about school and labor force outcomes for this cohort of teenagers and young adults. When combined with the information collected about each respondent during earlier child surveys and with data about the respondent's mother from the main NLSY79 survey, the young adult survey offers a rich background against which researchers can examine the school-to-work transition, as well as many other topics.

This article describes the NLSY79 young adult sample and surveys; it then provides detailed information about the employment section of the surveys. All of the information about young adult respondents can be linked to the data from their interviews as children, including their scores on the various assessments. More details about the child data are available in the *NLS Handbook* (<http://stats.bls.gov/nls/handbook/nlshndbk.htm>) or the *Child and Young Adult Data Users Guide*. Both can be obtained from NLS User Services at the address on the back of this newsletter.

### Overview of the young adult survey

The first young adult interview, conducted in 1994, included all children who would be at least 15 years of age by the end of that year. The younger children of women in the NLSY79 cohort continued to be assessed during the regular child interview. Since 1994, the young adults have been interviewed biennially, with new young adult respondents added to the cohort if they turned 15 by the end of the calendar year of the survey fielding. Young adults aged 21 or older were not inter-

viewed in 1998 due to budgetary constraints; all other young adult surveys (including the 2000 survey) incorporate respondents aged 21 or older. In 1998, 2,143 young adults responded to the interview, and 3,025 were surveyed in 2000. (Data processing is not yet complete, so the last number is preliminary.)

The first three rounds of the young adult survey usually were conducted in person, while the 2000 interview was administered primarily over the telephone. All young adult surveys have used computer-assisted interviewing for the main instrument. In 1994, 1996, and 1998, the sensitive questions in the self-report section were contained in a self-administered paper booklet. These questions usually were asked by the phone interviewers in 2000 but, when young adults were interviewed in person, they entered their answers directly into the interviewer's laptop.

Because the 2000 survey had a large telephone component, the instrument was redesigned to make it easier for the respondents to understand and answer questions without seeing the interviewer. However, the topics covered have remained fairly constant in all four surveys to date. The main topics are briefly described below, with the employment sections discussed in more detail in the second half of this article.

### **Content of the young adult surveys**

As in the main NLSY79 cohort, young adult respondents begin the interview by providing basic demographic information about the people who live in their household. The questionnaire then asks for information about the respondent's family background, including whether the respondent lives with his or her biological parents, the amount of contact with absent parents, and residential moves since the last interview. Extensive questions are asked concerning nonresidential fathers. The section on family background is followed by questions on the respondent's dating behavior, marital status, and marital or cohabitation history. For married or cohabiting respondents, this section also contains a relationship quality index.

Because the school-to-work transition is an important focus of the young adult survey, extensive information is collected regarding the respondent's educational and

training experiences. First-time respondents answer core questions about repeating or skipping grades and dropping out. Additionally, there are special questions on (1) school quality and teachers, for respondents currently in grades 1 through 12, (2) the use of career planning or college preparation services by respondents who are high school juniors or seniors, (3) the names of colleges and/or universities applied to by respondents in twelfth grade or in the first year in college, and (4) name, and type of school, major, degree receipt, and financial assistance for college students. The training section asks respondents who have graduated from or left high school detailed questions about the most recent training program outside of regular schooling or the military. Data include the type of training, the duration of the program, and the source of money used to pay for the training. Respondents also report the number of other training programs in which they have participated and whether they have received certificates, licenses, or journeyman's cards for practicing professions.

Like their mothers in the NLSY79, young adult respondents answer a number of questions about their children. The respondent identifies each child and describes the child's residence and contact with each parent. Young adults who have had at least one child are asked a series of parental attitude and parenting behavior questions, and all respondents state how many children they expect to have. Female respondents answer a short series of questions about their child's care and health in the first year of life. The 2000 survey also asked a series of questions derived from the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) series about the youngest child. The HOME series is administered to NLSY79 main cohort mothers of younger children during the NLSY79 child interview. Finally, respondents provide details about childcare arrangements for their youngest child and report their total childcare expenses for all children.

The financial resources available to the respondent play an important role in many types of research. Respondents report their income from wages and salary and self-employment, and provide similar information for a spouse or partner if applicable. They also report the total income for all family members in the household

and state whether they feel that their finances are strained. Respondents living on their own answer more detailed questions about unemployment compensation, child support, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Food Stamps, and other public assistance. Finally, independent respondents are asked a limited number of questions about assets and debts.

The NLSY79 young adult survey gathers data on the respondents' physical and mental health. Basic health information includes types of limitations, number of accidents and injuries, hospitalizations resulting from these accidents or injuries, height, weight, and insurance coverage. The young adult's attitudes are examined using the Pearlin mastery scale, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and a seven-item version of the CES-D depression scale.

Finally, the young adult answers a wide range of questions about parent-child relationships, computer use, drug and alcohol use, cigarette use, contact with the criminal justice system, sexual activity, and participation in community activities. In the 1998 and earlier surveys, these questions were included in a self-administered paper questionnaire. For 2000, the section was incorporated into the main instrument, with interviewer administration over the phone in most cases, and computer self-administration for in-person interviews.

### **Employment information in the young adult interview**

In addition to the wide range of information described above, the young adult survey collects detailed data on the labor force experiences of the respondents.

Most employment information is collected in the jobs and employer supplements section of the young adult instrument. This section first asks respondents to list all the jobs they have held since a specific reference date. In 1994, 1996, and 1998, the reference date was January 1 of the previous calendar year (for example, January 1, 1993, for the 1994 interview). The 2000 interview asked about all jobs held since the date of the respondent's last interview (or since January 1, 1994). As they are listing the jobs (ongoing jobs included), respondents also provide the month, day, and year on which they started and stopped at each job and report how many hours they work(ed) at that job in an average week. If the respon-

dent is unsure about the beginning and ending dates, he or she is asked to estimate the total number of weeks spent at the job.

The survey then gathers job-specific information. In 1994, 1996, and 1998, most questions were asked for all jobs reported during the interview. Respondents reported their regular rate of pay and the amount of money usually earned in overtime, tips, and commissions. The surveys also recorded the fringe benefits made available by each employer, the approximate employment size of each employer, the shift that the respondent usually worked, and whether the job was covered under a union contract or collective bargaining agreement. If the respondent had worked at a job for at least 9 weeks and for at least 10 hours per week, each of these three surveys collected information about the job's industry, occupation, and class of worker and recorded whether the respondent worked as a temporary employee, contractor, or consultant.

A few questions were asked in 1994, 1996, and 1998 only about the respondent's current or most recent job. In these surveys, the interviewer read the respondent a list of job characteristics and asked whether each applied to the job. For example, respondents stated whether they were exposed to unhealthy conditions, whether their coworkers were friendly, and whether the chances for promotion were good. Respondents then stated their overall level of satisfaction with the job.

In addition, the 1994 and 1996 surveys included, for each job, questions about the amount of time it took the respondent to get to work and what type of transportation he or she used. The 1996 and 1998 surveys included a series of questions about the respondent's promotions and promotion opportunities on each job.

The employer questions were changed for the 2000 survey. Because of the restrictions imposed by a telephone interview, some questions were dropped and others were asked about only the current or most recent job. For jobs other than the current or most recent, if the respondent worked for less than 10 hours per week or for less than 9 weeks, only the start and stop dates and hours worked per week were recorded in 2000. No other information was collected about these limited jobs.

Current or most recent job questions were asked first. If multiple jobs were held

at the same time, the job at which the respondent worked the most hours was examined in this set of questions. The respondent reported the industry of the employer, as well as his or her occupation and class of worker with that employer. Next, a detailed series of questions asked about the respondent's earnings on the current or most recent job. The survey gathered information about fringe benefits offered by the employer, including health insurance, life insurance, pension plans, a flexible work schedule, maternity or paternity leave, profit sharing, childcare, educational opportunities, and sick and vacation days. Finally, respondents stated their general level of satisfaction with the job.

A similar but shorter set of questions in the 2000 survey asked about the respondent's other jobs since the last interview. These questions recorded the respondent's industry, occupation, class of worker, and rate of pay. However, the fringe benefits and job satisfaction questions were not asked for these other jobs.

In each young adult survey, two specialized sections collect information from a subset of respondents on two specific types of jobs. First, respondents who have not worked since the last interview are asked a series of questions about their last job that lasted 2 weeks or more. Data include the date on which the respondent last worked for the employer and the industry, occupation, and class of worker for the job. The second set of questions is asked only of respondents being interviewed for the first time as young adults who had left school prior to a selected reference date (either the date of their mother's last interview or January 1, 1994). These respondents are asked about their first significant job after they left high school. If the respondent worked at a job for at least 2 months and for at least 20 hours per week, the survey asks about the respondent's start date, stop date, business or industry, occupation, hours per week, and usual earnings.

Respondents in 1994, 1996, and 1998 also answered questions about periods during which they were not working. Information was collected about both gaps between jobs and gaps within a job. For each gap, respondents stated why they were not working and whether they were looking for work or on layoff during any part of the gap. Detailed gaps questions

were not included in the 2000 survey; this interview asked only for the total number of weeks the respondent did not work while employed at each job.

Finally, young adults who have served in the military provide a history of their experiences, with detailed questions asked about up to two periods of service. This section determines which branches the respondent has been sworn into and the period of service. There also are questions about the respondent's most recent military job and training. Respondents also describe their most recent military job, military training received, and schooling prior to and during their service.

Many of the employment questions are similar to those asked of the respondents' mothers in the main NLSY79 cohort, permitting easy comparison across generations. Similar information also is collected from respondents in the NLSY97 cohort, a nationally representative sample of youths aged 12 to 16 as of December 31, 1996. Many of the NLSY97 respondents are in the same age range as the young adult children of the NLSY79.

#### For more information

All of the young adult data can be used in conjunction with the child assessment scores from earlier surveys, information about the mother's prenatal care and the respondent's health as a child, the mother's work history, the child's schooling data, and a variety of other variables to investigate the relationships among mothers' experiences and behaviors, child development, and young adult outcomes. Information about the young adults collected during earlier child surveys is included in the same data set as the information from the young adult surveys. Mothers' data are contained on the NLSY79 main CD.

Interested researchers can obtain the various documentation items mentioned in this article, such as the *Child and Young Adult Data Users Guide*, from NLS User Services. User Services also distributes the child and young adult data CD-ROMs, as well as the questionnaires used to administer the interview. Perusing the data CD and the questionnaires can help users determine whether the data set is appropriate for their research needs.

For more information about the main NLSY79 data set, which includes the

mothers of young adult respondents, researchers should refer to the *NLSY79 User's Guide*, also available from NLS User Services. Because most of the mothers' variables are not contained on the child and young adult CD, researchers who plan to use the mothers' variables in analysis also must obtain the main NLSY79 data release.

## Frequently Asked Questions

NLS User Services encourages researchers to contact them with questions and problems they have encountered while accessing and using NLS data 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. All of these questions refer to the NLSY79 cohort.

*Q1. How can it be determined which NLSY79 respondents lived with their parents in the early survey years? There seem to be several different versions of the household interview, and not all versions include a question such as R01551., which asks whether the respondent lived outside of the parent's home. If respondents do not live with their parents, how can their living arrangement be determined?*

A1. From 1980 to 1986, the NLSY79 used three versions of the household record: A, B, and C. For 1979 only, four versions were used: A, B1, B2, and C. Version A was used if the respondent was living in the parental household, and a parent-figure usually answered the questions about the household instead of the respondent. Version B was administered to respondents living in group quarters, but the information collected re-

ferred to the respondent's permanent residence. In 1979, version B1 was used for those residing in fraternities, sororities, dormitories, and other such accommodations; version B2 was used for those residing in military quarters. Version C was administered to respondents who lived in their own residence. Only version C has been used since 1986. The household composition section of the *NLSY79 User's Guide* contains more information about the various versions and the groups who responded to each.

For each survey through 1986, a created variable (for example, R01879. in 1979) indicates which version of the household record was administered. A second created variable (such as R01880. in 1979) provides a code for the type of the respondent's residence. Respondents living in their parents' home are among those assigned a valid skip (-4) for the latter variable. Respondents who were in the version A group and who have a valid skip for type of residence lived with their parents. Other respondents had different living arrangements.

*Q2. I'm used to the data referring to the calendar year preceding the interview year for reciprocity questions. However, for income from government programs (such as total amount respondent or spouse received from AFDC), the 1994, 1996, and 1998 interviews all contain variables that refer to income in the calendar year in which the survey was conducted. Because the calendar year has not ended when the interview takes place, I am unclear as to how respondents could know their income for the full year.*

A2. Beginning in 1993, the collection of reciprocity income was changed to an event history format; this replaced the previous

format in which respondents were asked about income received in the preceding calendar year. The event history format asks respondents to report the spells (start and end dates) during which they received these types of income. For each spell, respondents then report the amount of assistance received. Because the questions refer to the last interview date, they collect complete information about all receipt through the current interview date. The information provided by respondents is then used to create a series of program participation history variables detailing the amount that a respondent received from each major assistance program for each month and year. These variables go through the respondent's most recent interview date. If a respondent was interviewed in August of 1994, for example, he or she would have valid skips assigned for the remaining months of 1994.

In the next interview, the respondent provides new information going back to the last interview date. Survey staff use these new data to update the old variables. For example, the 1994 reciprocity variables that were created at the time of the release of the 1979-94 data set were updated (replaced) with the data reported at the 1996 interview, and then updated again with the 1998 data. In the example, as part of this process, the valid skips for the remainder of 1994 would be replaced with the information provided in the 1996 interview.

These program participation history variables are located in the RECIP\_MONTH and RECIP\_YEAR areas of interest on the CD-ROM. A detailed description of the creation of these variables, including information about the use and replacement of valid skips, is provided in appendix 15 of the *NLSY79 Codebook Supplement*.

## Did You Know?

- In 1993, the NLSY79 asked respondents whether they are left-handed or right-handed. This information also is recorded for the children of the NLSY79 and the young adults in 1996 and 1998.
- In 1985, NLSY79 respondents reported their natural hair and eye colors. The 1986 child survey collected the same information for children of female NLSY79 respondents.
- The 1985 NLSY79 survey also asked respondents whether they were shy or outgoing when they were 6 years old and at the time of the survey. Measures of shyness also are available for the children of the NLSY79, as reported by both mothers and interviewers.

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