



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

NLSY97 Round 7 Data Release

Researchers can now access or order main-file data through round 7 from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The NLSY97 cohort includes 8,984 respondents born between 1980 and 1984. In round 7, which took place from October 3, 2003, to July 9, 2004, 7,756 persons from that cohort (86.3 percent) were interviewed. They included 5,783 (85.7 percent) of the original cross-sectional sample and 1,973 (88.2 percent) of the original supplemental sample of black and Hispanic youths. This article looks at changes made to survey content in round 7 and provides information about the data and documentation available to researchers.

Round 7 questionnaire content. The round 7 questionnaire is similar to the one used in round 6, but several changes and additions may be of interest to researchers. Most significant are three new sections administered in round 7: College choice, welfare knowledge, and domains of influence. Additional, smaller changes were made throughout the instrument and also are described below.

New questionnaire sections. The college choice section was administered to respondents from the two youngest birth cohorts (1983 and 1984) who had completed either the 12th grade or a GED at the time of interview. The name and location of each college to which the respondent had applied was recorded, along with the term in which he or she applied to enroll. Colleges are grouped by term of application, so that researchers can identify the range of schools—from “safety” (high probability of acceptance) to competitive—to which a

respondent may have applied at a given time. The names of up to five of the colleges to which the respondent had actually applied were recorded. Next, respondents were queried about any transferable financial aid that they may have received. Other questions recorded whether each college to which the respondent had applied had accepted him or her for admission, along with the type of financial aid offered by each college. Due to a programming error, the amount of specific aid offered by each college was not collected in round 7. This information will be collected in later rounds. (The actual college identities will be found only on the geocode release.)

The welfare knowledge section was administered to a subsample of nearly 500 female respondents with and without resident children. The welfare knowledge section asked respondents about their general knowledge of government assistance programs to low-income families. Respondents supplied the word they used to describe such programs, whether “welfare” or a State-specific term. Respondents were then told about a hypothetical family and asked to estimate how much in aid and Food Stamps, if any, the family might receive in different situations, or if the family qualified for government-supported health insurance. (These questions were designed to assess the respondent’s knowledge of government programs and were not necessarily expected to yield accurate answers). Finally, respondents answered questions about time limits on government assistance programs, Food Stamps, and government-supported health insurance for both children and parents. Due to confidentiality protections, the questions and data from the welfare knowledge section are accessible only to researchers with an approved geocode agreement with BLS.

All respondents in round 7 answered questions in the domains of influence section, which concerned areas of life in which respondents sought advice. Respondents gave the number of people they could ask for advice in several categories, including friendships and personal relationships; employment, education, and training; and managing money and the respondent’s financial situation. The survey then asked the relationship to the respondent of the potential advice givers (for example, “biological mother” or “spouse or partner”). Finally, respondents identified the person to whom they would turn first.

Changes to existing questionnaire sections. In round 7, the childhood retrospective was administered to respondents without a round 1 parent interview who had not already responded to this section in a previous round. Besides the same childhood retrospective questions that were asked in round 6, round 7 also asked an event history on childhood residence. In addition to querying respondents who were missing complete parent data, a control sample of respondents with parent data also was asked these questions. Finally, respondents reported whether they skipped or repeated a grade in school.

The education section of the questionnaire was updated for round 7 to reflect the maturation of the NLSY97 cohort. Questions referring to elementary and middle schooling were removed, while questions about graduate school and the highest degree received by the respondent were added. Information about the respondent’s formal high school and college education similar to that collected in previous rounds was recorded.

The employment sections of the questionnaire asked about all jobs, including

self-employment, that the respondent had held since the last interview. Data collected included dates of employment, industry, occupation, class of worker, rate of pay, hours worked, and reason why the job ended. The questions in the employment section are largely identical to those in round 6. The training section of the questionnaire remains essentially unchanged. This section collects information about any job training programs attended by the respondent since the last interview.

Also remaining largely the same are the income, assets, and program participation sections of the interview. As in previous rounds, these sections questioned respondents about income sources and assets. An addition to the assets section is a series of questions asking respondents about student loans. Users should note that assets questions were administered to a subset of respondents, those who reached either age 18 or age 20 since their last interview. In the program participation section, welfare questions now refer to the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) program in addition to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program.

The health section includes questions about health insurance coverage and utilization, in addition to questions on the respondent's general health. Questions on the respondent's height and weight were moved to the self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) in round 6.

As in previous rounds, respondents answered a number of questions on marriage and family formation. These questions collected information on all marriages and marriage-like relationships as well as on children born to or adopted by the respondent. Basic information was also asked on all residents of the respondent's household, including their gender, age, enrollment status, labor force status, and relationship to the respondent. The childcare section asked female respondents to describe the type and cost of the childcare they use for children under age 13. The fertility section contains questions on the respondent's contact with nonresident biological children. A series of questions administered to absent respondent parents asks about monetary and other support provided to the child and his or her family.

The NLSY97 continues to include an extensive series of questions on the atti-

tudes and behaviors of the respondent. These self-administered questions (SAQs) asked about family relationships, friendships, dating, sexual experiences, substance abuse, criminal activity and arrests, and religion. Beginning in round 6 and continuing for round 7, the SAQ section was divided into two distinct subsections. In the first section, respondents answered questions on family relationships, substance abuse, criminal activity, and contact with the justice system. Respondents also reported on family traditions and holidays, the parent-youth relationship, and parent knowledge of their activities. Questions on dating activity, romantic relationships, sexual activity, and birth control make up the second self-administered section. The dating section collected and updated information on the characteristics of the current dating partner and attempted to capture the transition of relationships from dating to romantic to sexual. The best friend section from round 6 was replaced by the domains of influence section in round 7. These two sections will continue to be rotated in future rounds.

NLSY97 data and documentation.

NLSY97 main-file data, along with data from the other NLS cohorts, are available now to researchers free of charge on the Web at <http://www.bls.gov/nls>. (Event-history and geocode data will be available in October 2005.) In addition, data can be purchased on CD-ROM for \$20. Also available from NLS User Services and on the Web will be the latest *NLSY97 User's Guide*, available 2 months after the main release. 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 2005 edition will update the previous guide with information about the round 7 survey and include more hints on using this complex data set more effectively.

Researchers interested in obtaining main-file data or documentation from the Web should visit the Web address listed above. Those desiring the data set on CD-ROM or printed documentation should contact NLS User Services. Questions on the data set also should be directed to User Services. (Contact information appears on the back page of this newsletter.) □

Introducing: NLS Web Investigator

Researchers can now access NLS data online through the NLS Web Investigator, a new Web-based interface available at <http://www.bls.gov/nls>. The main application of NLS Web Investigator is to access NLS variables for the purposes of identifying, selecting, extracting, and/or running frequencies or cross-tabulations. Both new and veteran NLS users can benefit from NLS Web Investigator's straightforward procedures for accessing data.

What follows is a look at some of the features of NLS Web Investigator and ways in which these features will benefit NLS data users.

Web Investigator versus Database Investigator. NLS Web Investigator updates the NLS Database Investigator software while maintaining much of its predecessor's functionality. The new interface allows the researcher to connect to a database and perform variable extractions without installing any software, hardware, or firmware on a local computer. Through a personal online account, a researcher's selected variable tag sets (see below), frequencies, and extracts will be available for a specified period from any computer location with Web access. Because there will be one central data source for all users, researchers will have the assurance that they are always working with the most up-to-date data, and that any necessary corrections to data errors will be immediate and universal.

Another added feature of NLS Web Investigator is value labels in the statistical results files. Users also will enjoy ready access to online NLS documentation, including survey questionnaires.

Both NLS Web Investigator and NLS Database Investigator are currently available to researchers.

One, two, three: the basics of getting started. Whether or not a user is familiar with the NLS and its variables, NLS Web Investigator is designed to provide quick access to NLS data. Each user sets up a private account online by submitting a valid e-mail address; a return e-mail verifies the address and provides a direct link to the account. With an established account, the user is then ready to get started.

A basic NLS Web Investigator data search might include the following easy-to-navigate steps:

- 1) select the desired NLS cohort;
- 2) choose filters to narrow the scope of that cohort's variables;
- 3) create a tag set of desired variables;
- 4) run extracts and/or frequency tables for tagged variables;
- 5) access the results.

Variable selection through search indexes.

After selecting a specific NLS cohort (NLSY79, Mature Women, and so on), users choose the variables they need through several search index options. Utilizing drop-down menus, they can search via MSWord in the categories of Title, Area of Interest, Survey Year, Reference Number, and Question Name. Text-based indexes also are now included. The search indexes also include a "not" option to exclude particular variables from a search.

Filters. The expanded search options allow users to search over multiple indexes at one time (for instance, searching both Survey Year and Word in Title), thus creating more efficient filters.

Users can also layer a filter through a single search index by choosing a general filter in the index, saving that filter, and then selecting a more narrow focus.

Tag sets. The accumulation of a user's selected variables is known as a "tag set." These tag sets are easily updated and can be saved to the server for 90 days after they are last accessed or saved to the user's computer.

Running frequencies and cross-tabulations.

Once a tag set of variables is formed, researchers can run simple statistics such as frequencies and cross-tabulations (with or without round-specific weights). They can either use SAS or SPSS statements to read an extracted data file, or produce a Stata dictionary. Results are received quickly, usually in less than a minute.

Once programs that develop extractions, frequencies, or tables have been run on the server, users can save the resulting files to their local computer or access the files from their personal NLS Web Investigator accounts. Extracts and tables are saved for 4 days.

Codebook information. For each NLS variable, NLS Web Investigator makes available an accompanying codebook entry that gives researchers substantial information on that variable. Depending on variable type, the codebook entry provides information such as question text, response value codes, frequency of responses, and minimum/maximum values. Where appropriate, the codebook entry also will show a variable's complete skip pattern and provide hyperlinks to relevant documentation.

Researchers can access a variable's codebook entry with a click of a button. Users are also given an option of running a codebook of the extracted tag set of variables. This codebook file is created using ASCII-text format that can be opened in Microsoft Notepad or other text editors.

Custom weights. NLS Web Investigator provides a weighting program option that helps users to create a custom set of survey weights, which improves a researchers' ability to accurately calculate summary statistics from multiple years of data.

User's manual. Besides providing an overview of NLS Web Investigator and its supporting documentation, the *NLS Web Investigator's User's Manual* includes a step-by-step procedural on how to access, extract, and run data. New users may find it helpful to read through these outlined steps to familiarize themselves with the procedure.

Supplementary documentation. In addition to the general-use user's manual, NLS Web Investigator supplies user's guides specific to each cohort. These guides provide background details on the survey's history, sample design, types of variables, and a topical guide of the variables.

Questionnaires and other supporting documentation are available from the NLS Web Investigator for all cohorts. Newer questionnaires are in HTML format, while older documentation is available as PDF files.

User support. If researchers need assistance regarding the use of NLS Web Investigator, they can contact NLS User Services at usersvc@chrr.ohio-state.edu or call (614) 442-7366. □

Grandparent Characteristics and Relationships

NLS users are likely familiar with the potential to explore mother-child relationships by using the NLSY79 child/young adult data in conjunction with the main NLSY79 data of these offspring's mothers. However, data gathered from the main youth cohort about their parents also can be used to link children and young adults to their grandparents, supplementing information directly available from the child and young adult surveys. Grandparent data also are found in other NLS surveys.

Grandparent data in the NLSY79 surveys.

Information about childcare provided by grandparents can be found in the childcare section of the main youth questionnaire. Respondents who indicated that some or all of their childcare was provided by a grandparent were asked about any compensation that the grandparent received. In addition, respondents have indicated whether the mother's parents, grandparents, or in-laws helped to pay for another form of childcare.

Childcare questions also were asked of the young adults regarding their own children, and information was solicited about grandparent care for these grandchildren of the main youth cohort's mothers. These young adults indicated any compensation, cash or otherwise, that they have given in payment to childcare providers.

The family background section of the main youth survey provides information on basic characteristics of the maternal grandparents of the NLSY79 children. This information, collected from mothers of the NLSY79 children in 1979, includes highest grade completed, age, and distance of residence from the mother at this time. In addition, the 40+ Health Module, administered to respondents aged 40 and older in later survey years, collected information on whether the mother's parents were living or dead, and whether they had any major health problems. Since 1998, this series has been administered to all respondents during their first interview after they turn 40.

Issues involving resident grandparents can be addressed using data in the household interview section. Resident grandparents can be identified within the main

youth and young adult household rosters. There are created variables in the child database, in the area of interest called Maternal Household Composition, that indicate the presence of grandparents in the household. More extensive information than previously discussed often is available for such resident grandparents, including information about their employment. More limited information is available about the resident grandparents of main youth cohort respondents. These data were collected retrospectively in the 1988 childhood residence section and identify resident grandparents only for youths who were not living with their parents.

The child self-administered supplement asks which adults (with grandparents as a possible response) make rules about the child's behavior in such areas as socializing, religious training, television watching, and spending money. It also asks with whom the child (aged 10 to 14) usually discusses sex.

Grandparent data in other NLS surveys.

For all NLS cohorts, if grandparents were living in the same household as respondents, they were identified on the household roster. Because many respondents have lived in multigenerational households at some point in their lives, researchers are encouraged to study how these living situations relate to other factors.

Information on childcare provided by grandparents, similar in content to that provided by the Young Adult survey, is available from the young women and mature women surveys and also from the NLSY97. The NLSY97 queries additionally about the location of, travel to, and hours spent in such care. These data also include variables from the parent interview detailing the NLSY97 respondent's responding parent's coresidence with the respondent's grandparents. Year of birth and highest grade of schooling for the responding parent's biological mother and father are available as well, along with information about non-responding parent's parents.

Using the mother/daughter pairings of the mature women and young women cohorts, it is possible to find information regarding grandparents and grandchildren in the transfer sections.

Finally, some researchers have used in-

formation available from the NLS of older men about the birthplace of the parents and grandparents of these respondents.

Literature review. Researchers interested in understanding these and other issues surrounding grandparents are encouraged to examine the following examples of NLS-related grandparent research (See the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* at <http://www.nlsbibliography.org> for a more complete listing):

Baydar, Nazli and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. "Effects of Maternal Employment and Child Care Arrangements in Infancy on Preschoolers' Cognitive and Behavioral Outcomes." *Developmental Psychology* 27, 6 (November 1991): 932-945. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Caputo, Richard K. "Depression and Health among Grandmothers Co-Residing with Grandchildren in Two Cohorts of Women." *Families in Society* 82, 5 (September/October 2001): 473-483. [Mature Women, Young Women]

Cooley, Marcia L. and Donald G. Unger. "The Role of Family Support in Determining Developmental Outcomes in Children of Teen Mothers." *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 21, 3 (Spring 1991): 217-234. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Gordon, Rachel A. "Multigenerational Coresidence and Welfare Policy." *Journal of Community Psychology* 27, 5 (September 1999): 525-549. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Hawkins, Alan J. *Patterns of Coresident Adult Men in Maritally Disrupted Families and the Verbal Intellectual Functioning and Psychosocial Dysfunctioning of Young Children*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1990. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Hill, M. Anne and June E. O'Neill. "Family Endowments and the Achievement of Young Children with Special Reference to the Underclass." *Journal of Human Resources* 29, 4 (Fall 1994): 1064-1100. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Presser, Harriet B. "Some Economic Complexities of Child Care Provided by Grandmothers." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51, 3 (August 1989): 581-591. [NLSY79] □

Errata Notices Available Online

Although NLS staff members make every effort to ensure the accuracy of each data release, occasionally mistakes are discovered. Prior to working with an NLS data file, users should ensure that they are working with the most up-to-date data and documentation files, along with making every effort to acquire current information on data or documentation errors.

A cohort-specific list of errors can be accessed on the Internet through the BLS Web site, <http://www.bls.gov/nls>. Under "General Overviews," click on the link for the relevant survey. Errata are located under the "Documentation" heading on each survey's overview page, along with the most current version of that cohort's user's guide.

Error notices and information on how to acquire the corrected data or documentation also appear in *NLS News*, the quarterly NLS newsletter, available online at the BLS Web site.

Errata will become less of a problem as more researchers use NLS Web Investigator. (See the second article in this issue of the newsletter.) With NLS Web Investigator, researchers will be able to access the most current data set, which will reflect the latest additions or corrections. □

Frequently Asked Questions

The staff of NLS User Services encourages researchers to contact them with questions and problems 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.

Q1. For a project involving homeless families, I'm trying to determine whether any information is collected on the NLSY79 cohort that would allow me to identify some-

one who is homeless. If a respondent was homeless at the time they were interviewed, or had been homeless at some point since their last interview, would this be captured? I did see that, for the NLSY97 cohort, a person can indicate that he/she is living in a shelter or on the streets. Is there any equivalent question/response for the NLSY79 cohort?

A1. The main NLSY79 has not collected data specifically on homeless status of respondents or whether they have been homeless at any time since the last interview. Respondents who were homeless at the time of the survey should have reported living in some type of temporary individual quarters. A question on homelessness is asked in the 2004 young adult survey.

Q2. I'm hoping to find a variable in the NLSY79 that captures the economic situation of parents/family when a respondent was growing up. Is parents' income (or parents' wealth) recorded?

A2. Parents' income was not collected systematically in the NLSY79. However, household income was collected, and, if the respondent was living with the parents, one could infer parents' income.

Q3. While using the NLSY79 child and mother data, I have been unable to find any asset data in 2002. Am I missing something?

A3. Questions on assets in the main youth survey, from which one could derive information about the assets of children's families, were not asked in 1991 and 2002. The asset questions reappeared in 2004 and will now be featured every other survey year.

Q4. I am interested in the height and weight variables for the Children of NLSY79. I noticed that in 1986, there doesn't seem to be an indication of whether these variables were measured by interviewer or reported by mother. Was that information not reported?

A4. This was not reported in 1986. Information on the method of height and weight report (mother report versus measurement) was collected starting with in 1988. □

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*. See the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* at <http://www.nlsbibliography.org> for a comprehensive listing of NLS-related research.

Anderson, Steven G., and Mary Keegan Eamon, "Stability of Health Care Coverage among Low-Income Working Women," *Health and Social Work*, 30, 1 (February 2005): 7-18. [NLSY79]

Baum, Charles L., II, and William F. Ford, "The Wage Effects of Obesity: A Longitudinal Study," *Health Economics* 13, 9 (September 2004): 885-99. [NLSY79]

Berger, Lawrence M., Jennifer Hill, and Jane Waldfogel, "Maternity Leave, Early Maternal Employment and Child Health and Development in the U.S.," *Economic Journal* 115, 501 (February 2005): F29-F48. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Grogan-Kaylor, Andrew, "The Effect of Corporal Punishment on Antisocial Behavior in Children," *Social Work Research* 28, 3 (September 2004): 153-62. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Hao, Lingxin, Nan M. Astone, and Andrew J. Cherlin, "Adolescents' Formal Employment and School Enrollment: Effects of State Welfare Policies," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 23, 4 (Fall 2004): 697-721. [NLSY97]

James-Burdumy, Susanne N., "The Effect of Maternal Labor Force Participation on Child Development," *Journal of Labor Economics* 23, 1 (January 2005): 177-212. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Kawaguchi, Daiji, "Peer Effects on Substance Use Among American Teenagers," *Journal of Population Economics* 17, 2 (2004): 351-68. [NLSY97]

Leigh, Duane E., and Andrew Matthew Gill, "The Effect of Community Colleges on Changing Students' Educational Aspirations," *Economics of Education Review* 23, 1 (Feb-

ruary 2004): 95-103. [NLSY79]

Piquero, Alex R., Timothy Brezina, and Michael G. Turner, "Testing Moffitt's Account of Delinquency Abstinence," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 42, 1 (February 2005): 27-55. [NLSY97]

Plotnick, Robert D., Irwin Farfinkel, Sara S. McLanahan, and Inhoe Ku, "Better Child Support Enforcement: Can It Reduce Teenage Premarital Childbearing?" *Journal of Family Issues* 25, 5 (July 2004): 634-58. [NLSY79]

Rotolo, Thomas, and John Wilson, "What Happened to the 'Long Civic Generation'? Explaining Cohort Differences in Volunteerism," *Social Forces* 82, 3 (March 2004): 1091-121. [Mature Women, Young Women]

Stern, David, Yingquan Song, and Bridget O'Brien, "Company training in the United States 1970-2000: What have been the trends over time?" *International Journal of Training and Development* 8, 3 (2004): 191-209. [Mature Women, NLSY79, Young Men, Young Women]

Teachman, Jay, and Lucky M. Tedrow, "Wages, Earnings, And Occupational Status: Did World War II Veterans Receive A Premium?" *Social Science Research* 33, 4 (December 2004): 581-605. [Older Men]

Ulimwengu, John M., and David S. Kraybill, "Poverty over Time and Location: An Examination of Metro-Nonmetro Differences," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 86, 5 (December 2004): 1282-9. [NLSY79]

Wiens-Tuers, Barbara A., "There's No Place Like Home: The Relationship of Nonstandard Employment and Home Ownership over the 1990s," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 63, 4 (October 2004): 881-96. [NLSY79]

Willetts, Marion C., and Nick G. Maroules, "Does Remarriage Matter? The Well-Being of Adolescents Living with Cohabiting versus Remarried Mothers," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 41, 3-4 (2004): 115-34. [NLSY97] □

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