

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

Release of Preliminary 2008 NLSY79 Young Adult Data

In June 2009, researchers can access a preliminary version of the 2008 Young Adult data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79, available through the NLS Investigator. This release includes all of the data collected for young adults interviewed in the 2008 data collection round as well as a limited number of created variables.

Because the release is preliminary, it will not include data from any of the data collection rounds before 2008; however, the new data can be easily linked to the final 2006 Child/Young Adult data release as well as to the most recent NLSY79 data release. The final 2008 Child and Young Adult dataset, including all previous data, is scheduled to be available by spring 2010. *(Users are reminded that the reference numbers on the preliminary release will not match the reference numbers on the final merged release).*

In 2008, interviews were completed with 6,306 young adult respondents, 83 percent of those eligible for the survey. The 2008 survey round is the eighth wave of young adult data. Since 1994, NLSY79 children aged 15 and older no longer receive cognitive and other assessments like those given to their younger counterparts. Instead, they participate in a personal or telephone interview that asks about work experience, military experience, schooling, training, family background, health, fertility, income and assets, dating and relationships, attitudes, and drug and alcohol use. The 2008 interview includes a number of new variables, including the following:

- Young adult respondents answered new questions about relationships, including questions (for cohabitating or married respondents) about how long a respondent was romantically involved before living together and if they planned to

marry or cohabit (again). Respondents also gave opinions (both generally and for themselves, specifically) on having children within nonmarital cohabitating relationships.

- A question ascertaining whether a job was temporary or permanent was added for all jobs. For the primary job only, respondents answered a new sequence about supervisory responsibility. These new additions to the employer supplement sequence were derived from the NLSY79 main survey.
- New questions about fertility include information about the residence of each of the respondent's children immediately following birth and the respondent's relationship to the other biological parent at that time. Female respondents answered questions about work experiences around the birth of each child. A new series about co-parenting also was added.
- The attitudes section includes a new six-item anger scale. Respondents estimated how many days in the week prior to the interview they lost their temper, felt annoyed/frustrated, yelled at someone/something, felt rage, felt angry, or felt critical of others.
- Four items designed to measure social networks, adapted from the Midlife Development in the United States survey and the Americans' Changing Lives survey, have been added to the self-report section. Respondents answered questions about how much they feel loved and cared for by relatives and friends and the degree to which they feel they can open up to these social groups.
- In the family background section, respondents who reported some form of Christianity as their religion answered a new question ascertaining whether they

consider themselves born-again/evangelical Christians.

- Questions in the health section related to exercise and time spent using computers were expanded into a more detailed sequence.
- Finally, a new series was added in the military section to find out about experiences either working as a civilian or being deployed in a foreign country during a combat period.

In 1994 and 1996, the young adult samples included all children aged 15 and older. The young adult sample in 1998 was limited to those aged 15 to 20. In 2000, the sample again included young adults aged 15 and older; however, approximately 40 percent of the young adults aged 15 to 20 from the black and Hispanic oversample families were not fielded in 2000 for budgetary reasons. The young adults not interviewed in 2000 were again eligible to be interviewed from 2002 forward. There have been no sample restrictions for age in the last four survey waves. The primary interview mode in 2008 was telephone, with a small portion of interviews completed in person.

Researchers interested in accessing the NLSY79 Young Adult preliminary release free of charge should visit www.bls.gov/nls and choose the link for "NLS Data." A user's guide and other documentation on the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult surveys can be found on the same Website. For more information, contact NLS User Services. (See the back of this newsletter for contact information.)

New Version of NLS Investigator Available

Researchers are now able to access NLS data through an updated version of NLS Investigator. The Investigator accesses

NLS variables to identify, select, and extract data and to run frequencies and cross tabulations. The Web address for the new Investigator is www.nlsinfo.org/investigator.

The user interface has been redesigned to make finding variables easier and faster. Both new and veteran NLS data users should find aspects of new interface that improve their workflow. New and updated features include the following:

- Preselected basic demographic variables are available for each cohort search. For instance, NLSY97 data users will find preselected variables available for gender, month and year of birth, sample type, race/ethnicity, and PUBID (the respondent's unique identification code). These short sets of variables are integral to most searches and can speed up research by eliminating the need to search for commonly chosen items. To access this feature, see the "Recommended Demographic Variables" option located under the "Manage Tagsets" tab.
- Users can view the underlying codebook for a variable simply by moving the cursor over the question name. The codebook page then disappears when the cursor is moved away from the name.
- Users can now see multiple graphical formats (pie, bar, and line charts) for a codebook page's description of variable values.
- More options are available for downloading data, including a new "basic download" function that automatically includes the most popular options to speed up extractions.
- Data downloads now include more readable "question name" identifiers and instructions for renaming variables in statistical programs such as SAS, SPSS, and Stata. The new Investigator also has the ability to output XML files for researchers who want to provide documentation of what they have done on the Internet.
- Variables are now provided in three levels of relevance. Until now, researchers automatically saw every data item collected or calculated. As more data are collected, this results in an overflow of information, much of which is not directly relevant. To reduce the clutter, all variables are now tagged with a

level—primary, secondary, or tertiary. Researchers can opt to see the primary variables only, the primary and secondary variables together, or to view all variables. (See the Variable Preference Level box for options.)

- Researchers can now select a range of survey years when searching for a variable. (Use the "within" option available with the Survey Year search criteria.)
- NLS User Services will be able to help professors post sets of variables for use by students in a class.

The updated Investigator design is based on a new technology platform that allows for more growth and for new features to be added in the future. With the new design, information about system maintenance and improvements can also be communicated more quickly to users.

Even more features are in the works for the new Investigator. Additional anticipated enhancements include the following:

- A new way to find variables by browsing a topical index rather than searching for specific words.
- The ability to "roll up" the roster variables so that only the first variable in a "loop" is seen. Roster variables can be unwieldy to view because the same question series is repeated multiple times.
- Searching by variable type (such as created variable, event history variable, roster item, survey question, or machine check item).

Both the new Investigator and the previous version (www.nlsinfo.org/web-investigator) will be available to users for the next several months. Users are encouraged to start using the new version to become familiar with its features. Users can access a user's guide by clicking on the Help link of the Investigator Website.

Although users may access the new version of Investigator as "guests," additional features are available to those who create an account. Tools and instructions are provided to upload previous tagsets. (Users with saved tagsets on the server should use the same email address to register.) Having an account will also allow users to save tagsets on the server and to set some display preferences. Note: Users with very large datasets will find the Firefox browser works faster than

Internet Explorer with the new Investigator, but both of these commonly available browsers work fine for small and medium searches, datasets, and extractions. □

Data Collection and Data Release Timetable

The following is the latest schedule for NLSY79 and NLSY97 data collections and data releases:

- The NLSY97 is an annual survey with 10 rounds of data currently available. Data from round 11 should be released by early August 2009. Round-12 NLSY97 interviews began in October 2008 and will continue through the first half of 2009, with round-13 interviews scheduled to begin in September 2009.
- The NLSY79 main survey began as an annual survey in 1979 and became a biennial survey in 1996. Twenty-two rounds of data have been released to the public so far. Round-23 NLSY79 interviews commenced in January 2008 and came out of the field in March 2009. Data collected during round 23 are scheduled for release in spring 2010. Round-24 fielding is scheduled to begin December 2009.
- The NLSY79 Child survey, which began in 1986, and the NLSY79 Young Adult survey, which started as a separate survey in 1994, both interview children of the main NLSY79 respondents and are fielded at the same times as the main NLSY79 survey. Data from 1986 to 2006 are currently available. A preliminary release of the Young Adult 2008 data will be available in June 2009. (See related article in this issue.) □

Studying Obesity? NLS Weight Variables Available

Obesity-related variables can be found in several NLS cohort databases. These variables allow NLS data users to look at respondent weight and how it might relate to topics including wealth, family size, siblings, parents, geographic location, occupation, work hours, education, and sources of income. A cohort-by-cohort description of the obesity variables follows.

Obesity-Related Variables in the NLSY97 Cohort

Respondents have reported their weight and their height in each of the NLSY97 data rounds. (See YHEA-2300, YHEA-2050 and 2100, and YSAQ-000A and -000B.) Respondents describe their weight as very underweight, slightly underweight, about the right weight, slightly overweight, or very overweight (YSAQ-373). They then report whether they are trying to lose weight, gain weight, or stay the same weight, or whether they are not trying to do anything at all about their current weight (YSAQ-374). In round 1, biological parents of respondents reported their own weight and height (P4-004 through P4-006).

Respondents in rounds 1 and 6 (and upcoming in round 11) reported on their per-week vegetable consumption (YHEA-500) and on the amount of weekly exercise they did (YHEA-600). Questions about time spent watching television were asked in rounds 1 and 6. (See YHEA-620.)

Obesity-Related Variables in the NLSY79 Cohort

NLSY79 respondents reported their weight in the majority of the data rounds, including the last nine rounds. (See T08973.00 in 2006.) Height was reported in a few rounds including the latest released round. (See T08974.00 in 2006.) Female respondents with children also gave information on their weight before pregnancy and at the time of delivery.

In rounds 20, 21, and 22, NLSY79 respondents reported the frequency with which they engaged in vigorous activities that caused heavy sweating or large increases in breathing or heart rate (see T08976.00 in 2006, the frequency for light to moderate activities (T08981.00 in 2006, and the frequency of any strength and training activities (T08986.00 in 2006).

In 1998 and 2000, NLSY79 respondents reported whether their usual work activities include walking up stairs, lifting heavy items, or other physical activity. (See R68886.00 through R68886.11 in 2000.) Respondents also reported, in 1994, on their active and passive leisure activities, including sports and outdoor-

related interests (R50506.00 through R50506.08). In 1981, respondents answered a question about the amount of time they spent watching television (R05271.00-R05272.00). Respondents in the 2002–06 surveys answered questions about whether they read labels or ingredients before purchasing a food for the first time (T08993.00 and T08994.00 in 2006).

Obesity-Related Variables in the Child & Young Adult Cohort

The height and weight of children have been recorded in every round of the NLSY79 child survey. The mother either self-reports the weight and height of the child or the interviewer weighs and measures the child. (See C31313.00 and C31301.00 in 2006.) The mother also reports on each child's birth weight and on the amount of her own weight gain or loss during the pregnancy leading up to each live birth.

Mothers report whether the child was breast fed, when the child first began eating solid food, and whether he or she experienced serious feeding problems during the first year of life. In recent rounds, children aged 10 and older reported whether they engaged in sports or a physical activity after school.

Starting in the 1990 survey round, information about a child's television viewing habits is reported by NLSY79 mothers each survey year. (See C33887.00-C33880.00, C33918.00-C33919.00, C33947.00-C33948.00 and C33998.00-C33999.00 in 2006.) The children (aged 10 to 14) also answer questions about TV watching (See C33655.00 and C33659.00 in 2006.) In 2006, children aged 10 to 14 answered questions about the amount of time they spent playing video games (C33656.00 and C33660.00).

Since 1994, NLSY79 young adults (children aged 15 years and older) have been asked their height and weight in each survey round. Young adult respondents also reported information about weight gain or loss during pregnancy, as well as the birth weight of their children. In 2004 and 2006, respondents provided data on their vegetable and fruit consumption, exercise, computer usage, and amount of sleep, all possible factors in obesity. (See Y18868.00 through Y18872.00.)

Starting in 2000, respondents reported on how many hours they watched television (Y19298.00 in 2006). A question about hours spent playing video games was added in 2006 (Y19300.00). Self-perception of weight and plans about weight questions (taken from the NLSY97) also were added in 2006 (Y19312.0 and Y19313.00).

Obesity-Related Variables in the Original Cohorts

Participants in all four original cohorts of the NLS (the Older Men, Young Men, Mature Women, and Young Women) answered some questions related to weight and physical activity, although not to the same extent as some of the later cohorts.

The mature women cohort answered questions about height and weight in the 1992–2003 surveys, and the young women were asked their height in 1991 and their weight in 1991 and 1995. In the 2003 survey, both the young women and the mature women provided information about the typical amount of exercise they performed during the week.

The young men provided their height and weight in 1973, and the older men answered questions about height and weight in 1973 as well as in the 1990 re-survey. The older men answered questions about leisure time activities, including exercise in 1978, 1981, and 1990. Young men respondents in 1966 provided information on extracurricular activities in which they participated during high school.

Finding Weight-Related Variables and Research Literature

Weight-related types of variables may be found via the Investigator (www.nlsinfo.org/investigator) using search words such as *weight*, *height*, *activity/activities*, *health*, *food*, *television/TV*, and *exercise*.

Researchers interested in reviewing previously completed articles on obesity using NLS data are encouraged to access the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* (www.nlsbibliography.org) and search by keywords such as *Body Mass Index (BMI)*, *obesity*, and *weight*. Note that three recent bibliography citations related to weight issues can be found in the Completed NLS Research section of this newsletter. □

Did You Know? Handedness Variables Available in the NLSY

Do you need to know if a respondent is left-handed or right-handed? Handedness variables can be found in the NLSY79, NLSY97, and Child/Young Adult datasets.

For the NLSY79 cohort, respondents in 1993 answered the question, “Were you born naturally left-handed or right handed?” Approximately 87 percent of respondents labeled themselves right-handed, 10.6 percent labeled themselves left-handed, and 2.2 percent labeled themselves ambidextrous. (See R42850.00.) The NLSY97 respondents were asked in 2001 and 2002, “Are you left-handed or right-handed?” (YSAQ-INTRO-2A).

The NLSY79 Child & Young Adult dataset features a series of questions related to handedness. Young adults in 1996 and 1998 answered questions about the dominant hand used in writing, teeth brushing, and throwing a ball at a target. (See Y09035.00 through Y09038.00 in 1998.) They also were asked if as a child they had ever been forced to change the hand with which they wrote. Similarly, starting in 1996, mothers reported in each Child survey which hand their children used for writing, ball throwing, and teeth brushing. (See C35752.00 through C35754.00 in 2006.)

Handedness variables are not available for the Original Cohort (Young Men, Older Men, Young Women, and Mature Women) datasets. □

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Q1. What socioeconomic status (SES) variables are available for the NLSY79 cohort?

A1. Rather than one specific SES vari-

able, the NLSY79 dataset includes several created variables related to SES, such as variables on income, poverty ratio, highest grade completed, and hourly rate of pay. Researchers can find these variables using the Created Variables area of interest in the NLS Investigator at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator.

Q2. Is the NLSY79 asset information gathered with respect to the past year or for the current year?

A2. Respondents report the value of their assets as of the date of interview. For instance, for the question “TOTAL MARKET VALUE OF ALL VEHICLES R OWNS” [YAST-4810], the respondents give the current market value of all their vehicles combined. This differs from income variables, where respondents generally report their income as received in the previous calendar year.

Q3. If two NLSY97 respondents lived in the same household and had the same biological father, can the two siblings be linked together by a common father ID?

A3. Researchers can use the variables YOUTH_SIBID.xx and YOUTH_SIBRELY.xx to link siblings by their father’s ID. The SIBID variables identify all the youths from the same households, and the SIBRELY variables indicate which youths share the same father.

Q4. Why do there seem to be so many “-5” codes in the NLSY79 variable codebook?

A4. The “-5” code represents a noninterview. The total number of “-5s” is the total number of respondents not interviewed in that round. Each survey year a certain degree of sample attrition occurs, which can be due to a respondent being unavailable, unable to be located, unwilling to participate, or deceased. Note that 1979 is the base year with all 12,686 respondents interviewed, so there are no “-5s” that year. Each subsequent round has some number of noninterviewed respondents who were fielded, and two of the original oversamples are no longer being interviewed. The NLSY79 is noteworthy in that 80 percent of the eligible sample were interviewed in round 22 (27 years after round 1).

Q5. How can I determine whether a respondent in the NLSY97 has been in the military?

A5. In the NLSY97, the military is viewed as an employer. The YEMP_MILFLAG variables indicate that the employer is the military. In Investigator, use the Question Name Search and search on “MIL” (without the quotes). This will return all variables with “MIL” in the question name, including MILFLAG, MILPAY, and MILCODE (branch).

Q6. In the NLSY97, how can I find a respondent’s cumulative grade point average at the college where they received their degree?

A6. In the NLSY97 dataset, YSCH-23450.xx identifies which degrees the respondent has received from the particular college, YSCH-22707.xx asks for the respondent’s cumulative GPA at this particular college, and YSCH-20900.xx.yy collects term-specific GPA. To compute cumulative GPA by averaging out the term-specific GPAs, it will be necessary to pull these variables out of all rounds that the respondent reported attending this particular college. Use the NEWSCHOOL_PUBID.xx variable to identify which loop this particular college can be found in for various rounds.

Q7. For the NLSY79 variable “MONTH ENDED 1ST MARRIAGE” (T09976.00 in 2006, which marital statuses constitute an end to marriage? I am assuming that when a respondent states that he or she was divorced or widowed, the marriage is coded as “ended.” What happens if the respondent states that he or she is separated?]

A7. A divorce or death of a spouse is considered an end to the marriage, but a separation is not. Variables chronicling both the beginning and ending of a marriage have been created each survey year beginning in 1982. □

Completed NLS Research

The list that follows shows bibliographical information for recent research using data from the NLS cohorts that have not appeared in its current form in a previous

issue of the *NLS News*. (See the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* at www.nlsbibliography.org for a comprehensive listing of NLS-related research.)

Amato, Paul R., Catherine E. Meyers, and Robert E. Emery, "Changes in Nonresident Father-Child Contact from 1976 to 2002," *Family Relations*, February 2009, pp. 41–53 [Children of the NLSY79].

Angerer, Xiaohong and Pok-Sang Lam, "Income Risk and Portfolio Choice: An Empirical Study," *Journal of Finance*, April 2009, 1037–55 [NLSY79].

Atkins, Robert L. and M. Kyle Matsuba, "Association of Personality and the Likelihood of Serious Unintentional Injury During Childhood," *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, December 2008, pp. 451–59 [Children of the NLSY79].

Berdahl, Terceira A, "Racial/Ethnic and Gender Differences in Individual Workplace Injury Risk Trajectories: 1988-1998," *American Journal of Public Health*, December 2008, pp. 2258–63 [NLSY79].

Caputo, Richard K., "EITC & TANF Participation among Young Adult Low-income Families," *Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy*, Winter 2009, pp. 136–49 [NLSY97].

Cseh, Attila, "Effects of Depressive Symptoms on Earnings," *Southern Economic Journal*, October 2008, pp. 383–409 [NLSY79].

Davis, Esa M., Stephen J. Zyzanski, Christine M. Olson, Kurt C. Stange, and Ralph I. Horwitz, "Racial, Ethnic, and Socio-economic Differences in the Incidence of Obesity Related to Childbirth," *American Journal of Public Health*, February 2009, pp. 294–99 [NLSY79].

Eshbaugh, Elaine M., "Sexuality-Related Outcomes of Adolescent Children of Teen Mothers," *Journal of Family Social Work*, December 2008, pp. 373–88 [NLSY97].

Fosse, Nathan Edward and Stephen A. Haas, "Validity and Stability of Self-Re-

ported Health among Adolescents in a Longitudinal, Nationally Representative Survey," *Pediatrics*, March 2009, pp. 496–501 [NLSY97].

Hair, Elizabeth C., Kelleen Kaye, Randal D. Day, Kristin Anderson Moore, Alena M. Hadley, and Dennis K. Orthner, "Parent Marital Quality and the Parent-Adolescent Relationship: Effects on Adolescent and Young Adult Health Outcomes," *Marriage and Family Review*, May 2009, pp. 218–48 [NLSY97].

Hay, Carter and Walter Forrest, "Self-Control Theory and the Concept of Opportunity: The Case For A More Systematic Union," *Criminology*, November 2008, pp. 1039–72 [Children of the NLSY79].

Jokela, Markus, Marko Elovainio, Archana Singh-Manoux, and Mika Kivimäki, "IQ, Socioeconomic Status, and Early Death: The US National Longitudinal Survey of Youth," *Psychosomatic Medicine*, April 2009, pp. 322–28 [NLSY79].

Lee, Kyunghee, "Effects of Children's Head Start Enrollment Age on Their Short- and Long-Term Developmental Outcomes," *Social Service Review*, December 2008, pp. 663–702 [Children of the NLSY79].

Lemmon, Megan, Mira Whyman, and Jay Teachman, "Active-Duty Military Service in the United States: Cohabiting Unions and the Transition to Marriage," *Demographic Research*, February 2009, pp. 195–208 [NLSY79].

Michelacci, Claudio and Vincenzo Quadri, "Financial Markets and Wages," *Review of Economic Studies*, April 2009, pp. 795–827 [NLSY79].

Nomaguchi, Kei M., "Gender, Family Structure, and Adolescents' Primary Confidants," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, December 2008, pp. 1213–27 [NLSY97].

Powell, Lisa M. and Yanjun Bao, "Food Prices, Access to Food Outlets and Child Weight," *Economics and Human Biology*, March 2009, pp. 64–72 [Children of the

NLSY79].

Prause, JoAnn, David Dooley, and Jimi Huh, "Income Volatility and Psychological Depression," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, March 2009, pp. 57–70 [NLSY79].

Regan, Tracy Lynn and Ronald L. Oaxaca, "Work Experience as a Source of Specification Error in Earnings Models: Implications for Gender Wage Decompositions," *Journal of Population Economics*, April 2009, pp. 463–99 [NLSY79].

Romich, Jennifer L., "Trying to Keep Children Out of Trouble: Child Characteristics, Neighborhood Quality, and Within-Household Resource Allocation," *Children and Youth Services Review*, March 2009, pp. 338–45 [Children of the NLSY79].

Salsberry, Pamela J. and Patricia Benton Reagan, "Comparing the Influence of Childhood and Adult Economic Status on Midlife Obesity in Mexican American, White, and African American Women," *Public Health Nursing*, January-February 2009, pp. 14–22 [NLSY79].

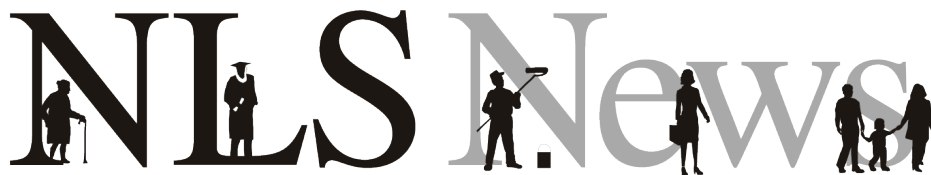
Spence, Naomi J. and Isaac W. Eberstein, "Age at First Birth, Parity, and Post-Reproductive Mortality among White and Black Women in the US, 1982–2002," *Social Science and Medicine*, May 2009, pp. 1625–32 [Mature Women].

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Usui, Emiko, "Wages, Non-Wage Characteristics, and Predominantly Male Jobs," *Labour Economics*, January 2009, pp. 52–63 [NLSY79].

Walsemann, Katrina Michelle, Gilbert C. Gee, and Arline T. Geronimus, "Ethnic Differences in Trajectories of Depressive Symptoms: Disadvantage in Family Background, High School Experiences, and Adult Characteristics," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, March 2009, pp. 82–98 [NLSY79]. □

NLS News



NLS Contact Information

NLS News is published quarterly by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is distributed both nationwide and abroad without charge to researchers using NLS data, as well as to other interested persons.

NLS User Services:	Center for Human Resource Research The Ohio State University 921 Chatham Lane, Suite 100 Columbus, Ohio 43221-2418 usersvc@chrr.osu.edu (614) 442-7366 (614) 442-7329 (Fax)	NLS documentation, data, and data updates:	usersvc@chrr.osu.edu
		NLS Web site:	www.bls.gov/nls
		BLS-NLS publications:	Jain_Rita@bls.gov (202) 691-7405
NLS Program Office:	National Longitudinal Surveys 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE. Room 4945 Washington, DC 20212-0001 Attention: Rita Jain NLS_INFO@bls.gov (202) 691-7405 (202) 691-6425 (Fax)	<i>NLS News</i> Editor:	Donna S. Rothstein Rothstein_D@bls.gov
		NLS Program Director and Media Contact:	Charles R. Pierret Pierret_C@bls.gov (202) 691-7519