

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

NLSY97 Round 9 Data Release Coming in October

In October, users will be able to access round 9 data (as well as the previously released rounds 1-8 data) from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The main file data, the event history data, and the geocode data will be released at the same time (in previous rounds, these data had separate release dates). The NLSY97 cohort includes 8,984 respondents born between 1980 and 1984. In round 9, which was fielded from October 2005 to July 2006, 7,338 persons (81.7 percent) were interviewed. Respondents included 5,437 (80.6 percent) of the original cross-sectional sample and 1,901 (85.0 percent) of the original supplemental sample of black or African American and Hispanic youths. As of the round 9 interview date, respondents ranged in age from 20 to 26.

Round 9 questionnaire content

NLSY97 variables cover a wide range of topics, including job characteristics, labor market status, education, training, health, marital and family characteristics, and income and assets. The round 9 questionnaire is similar to the one used in round 8, but with some changes and additions that may be of interest to researchers. Some changes made from survey round to survey round are due to the maturation of the respondents, while other changes reflect interest in new research topics.

Additions to round 9

New in round 9 are questions about volunteerism. Respondents were asked how often they did unpaid volunteer work (YSAQ-300V1) and what the main reason was for doing the volunteer work: court ordered, required for school or religious

group, or strictly voluntary (YSAQ-300V2). In related questions, respondents shared how often in the last 12 months they attended a meeting or event sponsored by a political, environmental, or community group (YSAQ-300V3) and whether they had donated money to a cause (YSAQ-300V4).

Questions were added about non-cash government program participation (see YPRG-35971 through YPRG-35974). Respondents were asked whether they had received any government assistance for transportation, energy costs, or child care. A question also was asked about receiving short-term cash assistance.

An expanded set of questions about self employment was included in round 9. Respondents answered questions how the business was started (YEMP-101102B), if it was a sole proprietorship or partnership (YEMP-101102D), number of partners and paid employees (YEMP-101102F and YEMP-101102J), and whether the business was considered a sideline to a regular job (YEMP-101104B).

More questions were added about the respondent's health plan. Respondents were asked the source of their primary health plan, who else was covered by the plan, and whether they had the option to obtain health insurance from a spouse or partner's plan. (see YHEA-1912, YHEA-1913, and YHEA-1915). If an employer offered insurance, respondents were asked if they participated in that insurance (YEMP-100300B) and if they did not participate, the reason for declining the participation (YEMP-100300C). Two similar questions were asked about health insurance coverage for self-employed respondents (see YEMP-191110B and YEMP-101110C).

Expanded child care questions, asked previously in round 5, were again included in round 9. Female respondents who

were born in 1983 or 1984 (the youngest NLSY97 respondents) were asked details about the primary child care arrangements for each child, including relative or non-relative care, child care location, transportation to and from the child care location, any assistance (person or agency) the respondent is receiving for child care, the number of hours the child spends being cared for, whether an older sibling watches the respondent's child, and how often the child stays by himself/herself. Female respondents who had no children were asked questions about the different types of care that would be available to them if needed, proximity to relatives or childcare centers, and the amount that the respondent would expect to and be willing to pay for care.

Round 8 variables not included in round 9

Some series of questions rotate in and out, depending on survey years. The political participation questions were not asked in round 9 since the round was not fielded during a national election year. The mental health questions are asked only in even rounds (beginning with round 4), so they were not asked in round 9. The "best friends" section was included in rounds 6 and 8 but not in round 9.

Continuing variables for round 9

Information about the respondent's formal high school and college education—similar to that collected in previous rounds—was recorded. A college choice section, introduced in round 7, recorded each college that respondents applied to, along with the term in which they applied to enroll. Respondents also were queried about any transferable financial aid they might have received. Other questions recorded whether each college to which the respondent applied accepted him or her for admission,

along with the type of financial aid offered by each college. The identities of colleges referred to in responses to this section will be available only on the geocode release.

The employment sections of the questionnaire continued to ask about all jobs, including self-employment, the respondent had held since the last interview. Data collected include dates of employment, industry, occupation, class of worker, rate of pay, hours worked, reason the job ended, and training. The questions in the employment section were largely identical to those in round 8.

Also remaining largely the same were the income, assets, and program participation sections of the interview. As in previous rounds, these sections questioned respondents about income sources and asset and debt holdings. The asset and debt questions are asked only of respondents who are age 20 or 25.

The health section continued to include questions about the respondent's general health.

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 respondents. Family questions were complemented by the collection of basic information on all residents of the respondent's household, including their gender, age, enrollment status, labor force status, and relationship to the respondent.

The round 9 survey continued to include an extensive series of questions on the attitudes and behaviors of the respondent. These self-administered questions asked about family relationships, friendships, dating, sexual experiences, substance abuse, criminal activity, and arrests.

Event history data

The event history data include created variables covering four major topics: employment status, marital status, program participation, and schooling experiences. Each topic is documented through a series of arrays that show the respondent's status or activities during each week, month, or year within a specific period.

Geocode data

These variables, which provide information for each respondent's county of residence,

are available as a separate data set and are not included in the main/event history database. Due to the confidential nature of these data, completion of a thorough application process and confidentiality agreement is required to obtain access to them. Most of the variables described in this section have question names that begin with "GEO_."

The geocode data set provides a list of the counties in which respondents lived between interviews. The unemployment rate for the respondent's metropolitan area or State also is reported.

The final group of variables on the geocode CD focuses on colleges attended by the respondents. Survey staff use information from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to provide users with the identification code (UNIT-ID) and State of each college attended by the respondent. For rounds 7 through 9, information on the colleges to which a respondent applied also is available. The identification codes can be used to associate the NLSY97 respondent's college with various characteristics of the institution contained in the IPEDS database. These college choice geocode variables begin with the prefix "YCOC."

Obtaining NLSY97 data

NLSY97 main-file data and supporting documentation, along with data and documentation from the other NLS cohorts, are available to researchers free of charge on the Web at www.bls.gov/nls (select "Obtaining NLS Data" from the NLS page menu).

Because the NLSY97 geocode data set contains confidential data, researchers interested in obtaining the geocode CD must complete the accessing agreement required by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). This process includes filling out an application and signing a confidentiality agreement. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for processing the application. For more information, or to receive an application for access, see the NLSY97 section of the NLS Web site or contact NLS User Services. (See the back cover of this newsletter for contact numbers.) □

Early Release for 2006 NLSY79 Young Adult Data

Researchers can now access a preliminary

version of the 2006 Young Adult data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), available as a download or through the NLS Web Investigator interface. This release includes all of the data collected for young adults interviewed in the 2006 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 2006; however, the new data can be easily linked to the final 2004 Child/Young Adult data release as well as to the most recent NLSY79 data release. The final 2006 Child and Young Adult data set, including all previous data, is scheduled to be available by spring of 2008. (Users are reminded that the reference numbers on the preliminary release will not match the reference numbers on the final merged release).

In 2006, interviews were completed with 5,844 young adult respondents, 82% of those eligible for the survey. The 2006 survey round is the seventh wave of young adult data. Since 1994, NLSY79 children aged 15 and older have no longer been given cognitive and other assessments like those given to their younger counterparts. Instead, they have participated in a computer-assisted personal or telephone interview on work experience, military experience, schooling, training, family background, health, fertility, income and assets, dating and relationships, attitudes, and drug and alcohol use.

In 1994 and 1996, the young adult samples included all children 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 between 15 and 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 on. There also have been no sample restrictions for age in the last three waves. The primary interview mode in 2006 was telephone, with a small portion of interviews completed in person.

Researchers interested in downloading the 2006 NLSY79 Young Adult preliminary release free of charge should visit <http://www.bls.gov/nls> and choose either the NLS public use link for download or for NLS Web Investigator under "Obtain-

ing NLS Data.” Documentation on the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult surveys may be found on the same Web site. For more information, feel free to contact User Services (See the back of this newsletter for contact information.) □

Volunteerism Variables in the NLS

The NLS surveys offer volunteer-related variables in select years. A cohort-by-cohort description of those NLS variables follows.

NLSY79 Cohort. Female respondents were asked in 1986 if their need for child care was due to volunteer work. Females were asked in 1988 whether they had regularly participated in volunteer work during the four weeks prior to the interview. Respondents were asked a series of questions about community service work in 1998, but this service work was connected to obtaining public assistance payments. A new series of volunteer variables for male and female respondents will be included in the round 22 data release, which will be available in 2008.

Young Adult Cohort. Young adults were asked every survey year if they had performed any volunteer work during the past two years and, if so, through what type of organization (service, political, church, community action, hospital/nursing home, educational, or environmental). They were asked whether the work was strictly voluntary or if it was court ordered, part of a school project, required by church, or required for another reason. Young adults also were asked how often their parents acted as a volunteer at the respondent’s school.

Children of the NLSY79 Cohort. Beginning in 1994, children age 10 and older were asked each survey year if they did volunteer work or community service after school. In 2004, those who were age 14 were asked through what type of organization they volunteered. Starting in 1996, school-age children were asked to estimate how often either of their parents volunteered at school. The mothers themselves were asked if they volunteered in the classroom, at lunch, or on field trips.

NLSY97 Cohort. NLSY97 respondents were asked in all survey years about the duration of court-ordered community service for the arrest-loop portion of the survey. Round 9 data, which will be released in October 2007, will include four new variables about general volunteer work that include frequency, main reason for the work, meeting attendance, and financial contributions to social causes. These new questions are scheduled to be asked every other round beginning with round 9.

Original Cohorts. Respondents in the young women cohort were asked a series of questions about volunteer work (see survey years 1973, 1978, 1988, 1991, 1995, and 2003), including the amount of work (number of weeks and hours per week), reason, and organization. The mature women were asked the same series of questions in 1974, 1976, 1979, 1981, 1984, and 2003. The young women were asked in 1978 about child care needs for the time volunteered; both cohorts were asked about volunteer-related child care needs in 1995. In 1988 young women were asked if their volunteer work resulted in finding work for pay. Mature women respondents were asked details in 1979 on whether they held an office or position in the volunteer organization and their feelings toward that organization.

In 1978, 1981, and 1990, the older men answered questions about volunteerism within a series of questions about leisure time activities. The young men’s survey did not contain any questions about doing volunteer work.

Research about Volunteerism. Researchers interested in reviewing previously published articles on volunteerism using NLS data are encouraged to search the NLS Annotated Bibliography (www.nls-bibliography.org) using the keyword topic “volunteer work.” □

Computer Accessibility Variables in the NLS

Despite living in a technology-driven society, not all younger Americans have easy access to a computer. This limitation presents a potential handicap for school and job pursuits. Without easy Internet access, job searches can be limited and the job application process can be delayed. Many

teachers also assume students have Internet availability and assign homework accordingly. The NLSY97, NLSY79, Children of the NLSY79, and young adult surveys all contain variables about computer use and accessibility.

NLSY97 respondents in 1997-2000 and in 2002 were asked, “In the past month, has your home usually had a computer?” In the 2003 to 2005 survey years, respondents were asked if they have ever used a computer to get to a website. Respondents then were asked if they currently had access to Internet and where that access took place: home, school, work, internet café, public library, or a friend’s home.

For the NLSY79 cohort, respondents were asked in 2000, 2002, and 2004 if they owned a personal computer and if that personal computer was used for accessing the Internet.

For the Children of the NLSY79, computer-use variables were included each survey year. Questions included whether the child had a computer at home, if the child ever used a computer at school, if he or she had ever taken a class or training program on computer skills, and who helped the child learn how to use the computer (teacher, friend, parent, etc.). Additional variables included questions about home computer uses and how often the computer was used for those activities.

Young adult respondents answered a series of questions each survey year about computer accessibility and use, including questions about most common uses for the computer, how often the computer was used for certain activities, how often the respondent’s teachers had the respondent use the computer, and who helped the respondent learn how to use the computer. In 1994-1998, respondents were asked if they had a computer in the home. In 2000, the home computer question was replaced with “Do you have access to a computer?” Respondents were then asked where all such access took place: home, school, job, or elsewhere. In 2002, “library” was added a formal category. Respondents in 2004 and 2006 also were asked the number of hours in the typical week they used the computer.

Computer accessibility variables can be accessed through Web Investigator at www.bls.gov/nls. For accessing most computer-related questions, select the cohort of choice, then use the “word in title”

drop-down menu to choose “computer” as the search word. □

Using “Reason for Non-Interview” Variables

For longitudinal studies, high retention rates are essential. Considerable effort is made by NLS staff to keep respondents active for multiple survey years. Despite these best efforts, some respondents may not be able to or be willing to participate in a particular survey round. The “Reason for Non-Interview” variable (or RNI, as it is often abbreviated) is created for every survey year beyond the initial survey year and can provide users important information about a respondent’s lack of participation. Standard reasons for noninterview might include refusal, unable to locate, or deceased.

RNI categories in the NLS vary from cohort to cohort. What follows are cohort-specific details about the RNI variable:

RNI in the NLSY79. In the 1980s two administrative categories of RNI were added to the NLSY79. One reflected a decision not to refield certain cases determined to be extremely difficult to interview. The second category indicated that interviews would not be attempted with certain members of one or more of the NLSY79 subsamples. Thus, beginning in 1985, interviews ceased for 1,079 respondent members of the military subsample; each was permanently assigned a reason for noninterview of “military sample dropped.” A second group of respondents, those belonging to the supplemental economically disadvantaged, non-black/non-Hispanic sample, was similarly dropped from interviewing beginning with the 1991 survey.

The coding of deceased members of the two subsamples dropped from interviewing in 1985 and 1991 has been handled differently for the two dropped subsample types. Those respondents of the military sample reported deceased during the 1980–84 surveys, i.e., those with a code of “65 - Deceased” on a ‘Reason for Noninterview’ variable, have been recoded, beginning in 1985, to “68 - Military Sample Dropped”; this recode occurred for four cases. Thus the count of 1,079 reflects all members of the military subsample, both living and deceased, who were dropped from

interviewing; however, this means that the cumulative count of total deceased respondents on any post-1984 ‘Reason for Noninterview’ will be understated.

The 22 members of the supplemental economically disadvantaged, non-black/non-Hispanic sample who died prior to the dropping of the sample in 1991 were not similarly reclassified as dropped. The count of 1,621 for the economically disadvantaged, non-black/non-Hispanic sample in the 1991 ‘Reason for Noninterview’ variable reflects only the living members of the total 1,643 who were dropped; the 22 deceased members of the supplemental economically disadvantaged, non-black/non-Hispanic subsample remain coded as deceased.

RNI in the NLSY97 Cohort. Unique to the NLSY97 RNI variable is case disposition information, with participant categories such as “completed in person,” “completed by phone,” “completed by proxy parent/respondent disabled,” etc. In addition, the NLSY97 has more specific coding categories for refusal, including “refusal,” “hostile refusal,” “very hostile refusal,” and “gatekeeper refusal.” The latter coding category is for cases where the interviewer does not communicate with the respondents themselves but instead interacts with another individual who is answering the respondent’s phone or door and who, for whatever reason, refuses access to the respondent.

Respondents also may be unavailable during the fielding period. For example, individuals may be traveling or otherwise located in remote places with poor telephone access, or the project may be unable to secure permission to interview incarcerated respondents.

RNI in the Older Men. The Older Men respondents, part of the Original Cohorts, were interviewed in at least every other year from 1966 through 1983. They were then reinterviewed in 1990 in a special survey that included, where possible, the interviewing of deceased respondents’ widows. The Reason for Noninterview categories for 1990, therefore, included categories about the widow, including the widow’s locatability, widow’s mental and physical capacity, etc. Users should note that the RNI for 1990 includes the abbreviation “SP” in several categories, which in this case refers to “Sample Person,” (meaning the original

older men respondent) to distinguish those categories from the widow categories. Two RNI variables exist for that year, one RNI variable solely for widow information (look for the “W” at the end of the variable title) and one that incorporates both the Sample Person and widow information.

RNI in the Women’s Surveys. For survey years from 1970 on, the Young Women and Mature Women cohorts include an additional RNI variable titled “Reason for Noninterview—Revised/Deceased.” In 2003, the Census Bureau, through the cooperation of the Social Security Administration, obtained SSA records for those women respondents who had shared their Social Security number with Census to verify whether respondents were living or deceased. As was previously suspected, a comparison of the SSA data with the survey data shows a substantially higher number of deceased respondents than was initially recorded. To correct for past survey discrepancies, the ‘Revised/Deceased’ variable using the SSA data was created. Researchers are urged to use these updated variables rather than the original ‘Reason for Noninterview’ variables.

Accessing the RNI variables. Reason for Noninterview variables can be accessed through Web Investigator at www.bls.gov/nls. Users can search by typing “reason for noninterview” in the Search Variable Title option (for the NLSY97, type “reason for non interview” with a space between the non and the interview). User’s Guides for each cohort include tables showing RNI cross tabulated with various categories (for instance, gender, race/ethnicity, and sample type). Electronic editions of these cohort-specific User’s Guides can be found within the “documentation” tab in Web Investigator. □

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. Some recent questions and answers that may be of general interest to NLS users are listed below.

Q1. I have a question regarding survey years for the NLSY97. I noticed that for rounds 2-7, the interviews are carried out between October and April/May of the following year. For example, for Round 2, the interviews are conducted between October 1998 and April 1999; for Round 3: October 1999 and April 2000. Does this mean that when I pick a variable in Survey Year 1999, parts of the data are from Round 2 and some are from Round 3?

A1. A "round" refers to a single field period, regardless of the calendar date. For the NLSY97, the year listed in the Web Investigator is the year that a given round began. For example, round 2 was conducted in 1998-99. In the data set, these variables are listed as 1998 variables. Similarly, any round 3 (1999-2000) information is listed as 1999 data.

Q2. For the NLSY97, do siblings who are away at college (meaning they aren't living at home while attending college) count as household members or non-household members?

A2. Until round 7, the youth respondent was asked to roster their permanent residence. If the respondent considered siblings who were away at college to be part of his/her permanent residence, then he/she would have included them on the household roster. No special instructions were given to the respondent on how to treat such individuals. Beginning in round 7, respondents were asked to roster their current residence.

Q3. Is there an age-of-death variable available for the Older Men Cohort? I see in the last round of the survey (1990) there are variables for what appear to be the spouse's death age, since they use the abbreviation "SP," but I did not see a variable for the death age of the participant.

A3. The age at death variables are R07075.00-R07077.40. The 1990 variables that include "SP" in the title refer to the Sample Person (original respondent) and do not indicate spouse. In that year the respondent's widows and other proxies also were interviewed, so "SP" was used to indicate respondent. Because "SP" is a common abbreviation for spouse, and other researchers have been confused as

well, the titles will be changed. □

Completed NLS Research

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

Antecol, Heather and Bedard, Kelly. "Does Single Parenthood Increase the Probability of Teenage Promiscuity, Substance Use, and Crime?" *Journal of Population Economics* 20,1 (January 2007): 55-71. [NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Atkins, Robert. "Association of Personality Type in Childhood with Violence in Adolescence." *Research in Nursing and Health* 30,3 (June 2007): 308 - 319. [Children of the NLSY79]

Batty, G. David; Der, Geoff and Deary, Ian J. "Effect of Maternal Smoking During Pregnancy on Offspring's Cognitive Ability: Empirical Evidence for Complete Confounding in the US National Longitudinal Survey of Youth." *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 46,3 (March 2007): 377-377. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Burgess, Simon M.; Propper, Carol; and Gardiner, Karen. "School, Family and County Effects on Adolescents' Later Life Chances." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 27,2 (Summer 2006): 155-184. [NLSY79]

Cheng, Tyrone C. and McElderry, Cathy Gilbert. "How Do Drug Use and Social Relations Affect Welfare Participation?" *Social Service Review* 81,1 (March 2007): 155-165. [NLSY79]

Duncan, Greg J.; Wilkerson, Bessie; and England, Paula A. "Cleaning Up Their Act: The Effects of Marriage and Cohabitation on Licit and Illicit Drug Use." *Demography* 43,4 (November 2006): 691-710. [NLSY79]

Hollander, Dore. "Upward Mobility Benefits White Women's Infants But Not Black

Women's." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 39,1 (March 2007): 60-61. [NLSY79]

Keister, Lisa A. "Upward Wealth Mobility: Exploring the Roman Catholic Advantage." *Social Forces* 85,3 (March 2007): 1195-1225. [NLSY79]

Levine, Judith A.; Emery, Clifton R.; and Pollack, Harold. "The Well-Being of Children Born to Teen Mothers." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69,1 (February 2007): 105-122. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Lloyd, Kim M. "Latinas' Transition to First Marriage: An Examination of Four Theoretical Perspectives." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68,4 (November 2006): 993-1014. [NLSY79]

Renna, Francesco. "The Economic Cost of Teen Drinking: Late Graduation and Lowered Earnings." *Health Economics* 16,4 (April 2007): 407-419. [NLSY79]

Rubin, David M.; O'Reilly, Amanda L. R.; Xianqun Luan; and Localio, A. Russell. "The Impact of Placement Stability on Behavioral Well-being for Children in Foster Care." *Pediatrics* 119,2 (February 2007): 336-344. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Schnittker, Jason and John, Andrea. "Enduring Stigma: The Long-Term Effects of Incarceration on Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 48,2 (June 2007): 115-130. [NLSY79]

Srinivas, Sumati. "Social Attitudes and the Gender Pay Gap in the USA in Recent Years." *International Journal of Social Economics* 34,4 (2007): 268-275. [NLSY79]

Suh, Suhyun; Suh, Jingyo; and Houston, Irene. "Predictors of Categorical At-Risk High School Dropouts." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 85,2 (Spring 2007): 196-203. [NLSY97]

Sweeten, Gary Allen. "Who Will Graduate? Disruption of High School Education by Arrest and Court Involvement." *Justice Quarterly* 23,4 (December 2006): 462-480. [NLSY97] □

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