
Chapter 4: Topical Guide to the NLSY97

This chapter overviews the content of the NLSY97 survey. It presents summary discussions of sets of variables, arranged alphabetically by topic (e.g., “Employment,” then “Event History”). Each topical section begins with a page summarizing the information found within various subtopics in that section. Tables provide general information about age and other universe restrictions that apply to each subtopic.

Within each topic, the descriptions of the subtopics are also arranged alphabetically (e.g., “Fringe Benefits,” then “Gaps in Employment”). Each subtopic details the NLSY97 variables and refers the user to other related supporting documentation. Persons interested in reviewing, for example, variables containing data on a respondent’s rate of pay should turn to the “Employment” section and examine the subtopic “Wages.” A complete list of topics and subtopics can be found on the table of contents page of this guide.

Each subtopic begins with a summary of the content of the data set. This information is presented separately according to the survey instrument with which it was collected; note that all instruments are not included in every subtopic. For more information about the various instruments, see section 1.4, “Content of the NLSY97.” The survey instruments are identified as follows:

Youth Questionnaire. Information collected from the youth respondent is described in this section.

Parent Questionnaire (round 1). Data provided by the responding parent are described in this section. For information on the selection of the responding parent, see section 2.2, “Interview Methods.”

Screeners, Household Roster, and Nonresident Roster Questionnaire (round 1). This section describes the information gathered from the household informant during the initial portion of the first interview.

Household Income Update (rounds 2–4). This section describes the information gathered from one of the youth’s parents regarding the income of that parent and his or her spouse or partner.

Created Variables. A number of variables are created based on information provided by the respondents or obtained from other outside sources. Although the data in created variables are not directly collected during the interview, they are described in the summary of the content for each relevant subtopic. The name of each created variable is provided in the text discussion to aid users in finding the data on the CD.

Special Data Collections. The School Surveys, Transcript Surveys, and *CAT-ASVAB* data collections are administered at irregular intervals. Variables based on these special data sources are described in sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2, and 4.2.5 of this guide.

In addition to describing the available data, subtopic sections generally provide the following information:

Comparison to Other NLS Surveys: When similar questions have been asked of one of the other NLS survey groups, the subtopic will contain a paragraph briefly describing the comparable information. *Users should note that these descriptions are only intended to aid the user by pointing out areas of similarity; they do not imply that question wording or universes are identical.* Before using any data for comparison purposes, users should consult the *NLS Handbook*, the appropriate *User's Guide*, and the questionnaires for more exact information.

Survey Instruments: A short paragraph summarizes the location of the questions in the various questionnaires.

Related User's Guide Sections: This list directs users to other sections in this *User's Guide* that may contain information relevant to the current subtopic.

CD–Main Areas of Interest: These entries provide the areas of interest on the CD-ROM under which users will find the data described in the subtopic section. For more information on areas of interest, including a list of areas, see section A.2, “About the NLSY97 CD-ROM,” in Appendix A of this guide.

CD–Supplemental Areas of Interest: Data related to the main area of interest may be found in these areas. For example, the subtopic “Assets & Debts” refers users to the “College Experience” area of interest, which contains information on student loans.

Finally, subtopic sections may include “user notes,” which contain important information about some aspect of the surveys or data file, and “data hints,” which direct researchers to a particular variable or variables that should be used for a specific function.