



U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

NLSY97 Round 6 Data Release

Researchers now may order main-file and event-history round 6 data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The NLSY97 cohort includes 8,984 respondents born between 1980 and 1984. In round 6, which took place from November 2002 to June 2003, 7,898 persons from that cohort (87.9 percent) were interviewed. They included 5,899 (87.4 percent) of the original cross-sectional sample and 1,999 (89.4 percent) of the original supplemental sample of black and Hispanic youths.

This article looks at changes made to survey content in round 6. It also provides information about the data and documentation available to researchers.

Round 6 questionnaire content

The round 6 questionnaire is similar to the one used in round 5, but several changes and additions may be of interest to researchers. These changes are outlined in the paragraphs below.

Perhaps the most significant change is the extension of the health section. Instead of a few questions on the respondent's height and weight and general health, the health section in the round 6 questionnaire mirrors the extensive section on the respondent's health in the round 1 parent questionnaire. This section collects information on current or past chronic health conditions or life-threatening diseases; whether these conditions limit the respondent's ability to work, train, or attend schooling; and, for some conditions, the date of first diagnosis. A few questions on health knowledge and practices also are included. Survey designers intend to administer this expanded health section ev-

ery few rounds to track respondents' health status and practices over the life course.

New to the round 6 questionnaire is the childhood retrospective section. Like the expanded health section, it asks questions posed in the round 1 parent survey about the youth respondent. In the childhood retrospective section, youth respondents without a round 1 parent interview are asked about their childhood residences. All respondents are asked about the educational attainment of their biological or adopted mother and father. Finally, all respondents report whether they skipped or repeated a grade in school.

The employment sections of the questionnaire ask about all jobs the respondent has held since the last interview. Data collected include dates of employment, industry, occupation, class of worker, rate of pay, hours worked, and reason the job ended. The questions in the employer section are largely identical to those in round 5. The key change is in the removal of questions about freelance jobs such as lawnmowing or babysitting that are commonly held by teenagers. Because all respondents were at least 18 years old in round 6, this separate section was no longer needed; such jobs held by respondents age 18 and older are classified as self-employment, and information about these jobs continues to be collected in the employer section.

Users also should note that the gaps in employment questions were reorganized when the freelance questions were removed. The information collected remains the same, but question numbers and skip patterns have changed. Researchers using gaps data across rounds should read this section carefully to ensure that they are comparing the correct information.

The education and training sections of the questionnaire remain essentially unchanged. These sections collect information about the respondent's formal schooling, both high school and college, as well as any job training programs attended by the respondent since the last interview.

Also remaining the same are the income, assets, and program participation sections of the interview. These series ask respondents about income sources and assets. Respondents also report income received from various government programs for the economically disadvantaged. The main change in these sections is a shift in the collection of information about worker's compensation questions. These questions were moved from the program participation section to the income section and reworded to record this income more accurately.

As in previous rounds, respondents continue to answer a number of questions on marriage and family formation. These questions collect information on all marriages and marriage-like relationships as well as on children born to the respondent. Family questions are 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 childcare section was shortened for round 6. The abridged series asks female respondents to describe the type and cost of childcare they use for children under age 13. Added to the fertility section are questions on contact with nonresident children. This series, posed only to fathers in round 4, is answered by both male and female respondents in round 6.

NLSY97 continues to include an extensive series of questions on the attitudes

and behaviors of the respondent. These self-administered questions ask about family relationships, friendships, dating, sexual experiences, substance abuse, criminal activity and arrests, and religion.

New to round 6, and reflecting the expanded subsection on dating, the self-administered section is split into two sections to improve the flow of the questionnaire and to give respondents another break from the directed interview. In the first section, respondents answer questions on family relationships, substance abuse, criminal activity, and contact with the justice system. Questions on dating activity, romantic relationships, sexual activity, and birth control make up the second self-administered section. The expanded dating section collects information on the characteristics of the current dating partner and attempts to capture the transition of relationships from dating to romantic to sexual.

Also new to Round 6 is a series of questions on the respondent's best friend. Respondents are queried about their best friend's demographic and educational characteristics and then report how often they have solicited or received advice on various topics from that best friend.

NLSY97 data and documentation

NLSY97 main-file and event-history data are available to researchers free of charge on the Web at www.bls.gov/nls by selecting the "Obtaining NLS Data" link. Data can be purchased on CD-ROM for \$20; the CD includes not only NLSY97, but also data for all other NLS cohorts. Also available from NLS User Services and on the Web is the *NLSY97 User's Guide*. This guide explains the selection of the NLSY97 sample, describes the contents of the data set, and provides helpful information for researchers using the data. The 2004 edition, which will be available this fall, will update the previous guide with information about the round 6 survey and include more hints on effectively using this complex data set.

Researchers interested in obtaining main-file and event-history data or documentation from the Web should visit the Web address listed above. Those desiring the data set on CD-ROM, and/or printed documentation, should contact NLS User Services. Questions on the data set also should be directed to NLS User Services.

(Contact information appears on the back page of this newsletter.)

Correction to Mature Women Pension Data

The Mature Women 1989 data set includes a supplemental pension file (*pension.asc*) on each CD-ROM and downloaded release. This pension data file contains the actual pension descriptions taken from the written documents that all large and medium-size companies and government agencies file with the Department of Labor. Using "crosswalk" information included on the main data set and this supplemental pension file, researchers can obtain details regarding the pensions that cover many of the respondents.

With each CD-ROM and downloaded release, a dictionary (*pension.dic*) is also provided to allow researchers to construct a SAS or an SPSS program to read the data. NLS staff recently uncovered a problem that resulted in the data dictionary being incorrect for 26 percent of the cases. The NLS staff has recreated the *pension.asc* data file so that the current data dictionary is constructed consistently for all plans.

The corrected files are currently available for download on the Web and contain the word "fixed" in the file name. The revised data file will be included in the next release of data on mature women, scheduled for late 2005. Users who need more information about this problem should contact NLS User Services. (Contact information appears on the back page of this newsletter.) □

Characteristics and Analysis of Minimum-Wage Workers

Researchers using NLS data have a unique opportunity to learn more about minimum-wage workers. Each data set within the NLS family of surveys collects wage information along with detailed demographic and lifestyle data. Because respondents are regularly interviewed over their lifespan, researchers can examine the causes and effects of working at minimum wage for a specified period. For example, users can identify respondents who worked for minimum wage early in their labor force ex-

perience and compare differences among those with continuing low wages and those with higher incomes later in their careers.

The NLS data sets offer significant information on training programs, including many sponsored by the government. Respondents also report their participation in government programs for the economically disadvantaged. Using NLS data on these programs, researchers can explore connections between low-paid workers and levels of assistance.

Finally, NLSY97 collects detailed information on all components of a respondent's earnings. For example, rather than reporting average weekly, monthly, or annual income at a job, respondents are encouraged to report their hourly rate of pay along with income received in tips, commissions, bonuses, and other incentives. Respondents also describe their rate of pay if they are paid for piecework or by the job. Further, respondents report their overtime compensation separately from their regular earnings. These detailed questions on each aspect of the respondent's compensation allow researchers to examine the full picture of earnings among minimum-wage workers.

For further details about NLS data, see www.bls.gov/nls. □

HTML Questionnaires in the NLS

NLS administrators recently began using HyperText Markup Language, better known as HTML, to create NLS questionnaires. These HTML questionnaires replace printed versions used since the survey's inception.

The use of HTML questionnaires, a boon to interviewers and researchers, is largely unnoticed by respondents. HTML questionnaires are similar to other computer-assisted personal interviewing systems in that they offer increased ease of use and flexibility in survey design and administration. There is no significant change in how in-person interviews are conducted.

The NLS staff uses these HTML questionnaires not only for survey administration but also for distribution to researchers. NLS interviews are lengthy and include numerous skip patterns and question paths for different types of respondents. The printed questionnaires that were previ-

ously provided to researchers attempted to represent these complex survey programs in an accessible form, but the survey path was quite difficult to follow in the most complicated sections.

The new HTML questionnaires look similar to the printed versions, but they offer researchers significant advantages. Most important, hyperlinked questions mean that researchers can easily follow the question paths through the survey. Researchers need only open the questionnaire file in an Internet browser and find the beginning of the section of interest. They then can click on the underlined question names to jump through the instrument, following a path that could be taken by an actual respondent. Questions are linked both forward and backward, so that researchers can either move forward to find the next question in a series or move backward through the questionnaire to trace the universe of respondents asked a given question.

Because researchers access the HTML questionnaires electronically, they also can use all functions of the Internet browser to navigate through the questionnaire. This means that users can use the “find on this page” function available in most browsers to instantly locate a given question by name or read through questions that contain a key word or phrase. Users can also print out just the sections of the questionnaire they are interested in rather than storing and accessing a bulky hard-copy questionnaire.

Beginning with round 5 of NLSY97 and round 20 of NLSY79, electronic HTML

questionnaires will replace printed questionnaires for distribution to researchers. Electronic questionnaires are included with each NLS data file both on the CD and in the online download file. Questionnaires also can be accessed online separately from the data files by going to www.bls.gov/nls and clicking on the “Obtaining NLS Data” link. For more on the use of HTML questionnaires, contact NLS User Services. (Contact information is on the back page of this newsletter.) □

Frequently Asked Questions

The NLS User Services staff encourages researchers to contact them with questions and problems encountered while accessing and using NLS data and/or documentation. The staff makes every effort to answer these inquiries. Some recently asked questions that may be of general interest to NLS users are listed below, along with their answers.

Q1: My question concerns the NLSY79 variable for hourly rate of pay. For example, looking at R51652.00, the mean value is 1374.084. Does this mean that the mean value is \$13.74 an hour? The range for this variable is 10 to 15,000. Does this mean that the range of hourly wages is \$0.10 to \$150 per hour?

A1: Yes. There are two implied decimal places on the hourly-rate-of-pay variables. There is a note on the codebook page indicating “Actual Dollars and Cents.”

Q2: In NLSY79, I am looking for a more specific date of death for the respondent than just the day of the interview at which there was a noninterview response of 65= ‘dead.’ Is this available?

A2: The date of death has been not been collected systematically for NLSY79.

Q3: How is the hourly rate of pay calculated in NLSY79? I know from the user’s guide that it includes tips, overtime, and bonuses. What about benefits, either in-kind or cash? Since different studies use different definitions and measures, I want to have a clear understanding.

A3: For wages, the question asks the respondent to first provide the amount of pay by that employer that includes tips, overtime, and bonuses before deductions. Then the respondent provides the time unit—per hour, per day, per week, per year, or per piece. If pay is given in a form other than hourly, we create an hourly wage based on the amount of pay, the time unit, and usual hours worked per week. (See section 4.39 of the *NLSY79 User’s Guide* for an explanation of wages and the formula that creates hourly wage.) Other benefits, in-kind or cash, are not included in hourly wage.

In the income section of the questionnaire, respondents are asked to report income from wages, salary, commission, or tips from all jobs in the past calendar year (January through December of the year preceding the interview). This information is used in creating the total family income variable. Because the hourly-rate-of-pay

Did you know?

National Longitudinal Survey (NLS) information is at your fingertips via the World Wide Web at www.bls.gov/nls.

Included on this site are cohort overviews, the latest cohort user’s guides, economic news releases, an NLS bibliography, a data/documentation order form, an archive of *NLS News* newsletter issues, errata, custom weighting programs for several cohorts, and other tools and information for researchers.

This dynamic Web site is updated and enhanced frequently, so researchers are encouraged to visit often.

variable refers to wages at the interview date or job's end date and the income variable refers to the previous calendar year, the two amounts may not match exactly.

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 www.nlsbibliography.org for a comprehensive listing of NLS-related research.

Ahituv, Avner, and Marta Tienda, "Employment, Motherhood, and School Continuation Decisions of Young White, Black, and Hispanic Women," *Journal of Labor Economics* 22, 1 (January 2004): 115-58. [NLSY79]

Aizer, Anna, "Home Alone: Supervision After School and Child Behavior," *Journal of Public Economics* 88, 9-10 (August 2004): 1835-48. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Antecol, Heather, and Kelly Bedard, "The Racial Wage Gap: The Importance of Labor Force Attachment Differences Across Black, Mexican and White Men," *The Journal of Human Resources* 39, 2 (Spring 2004): 564-83. [NLSY79]

Aughinbaugh, Alison Aileen, and Maury Gittleman, "Maternal Employment and Adolescent Risky Behavior," Working Paper No. 366 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2003). [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Aughinbaugh, Alison Aileen, "The Impact of Attrition on the Children of the NLSY79," *The Journal of Human Resources* 39, 2 (Spring 2004): 536-63. [Children of the NLSY79]

Baird, Chardie L., and John R. Reynolds, "Employee Awareness of Family Leave Benefits: The Effects of Family, Work, and Gender," *Sociological Quarterly* 45, 2 (Spring 2004): 325-53. [NLSY79]

Baum, Charles L., II, "Has Family Leave Legislation Increased Leave-Taking?" *Jour-*

nal of Law and Policy 15 (2003): 93-114. [NLSY79]

Beron, Kurt, and George Farkas, "The Detailed Age Trajectory of Oral Vocabulary Knowledge: Differences by Class and Race," *Social Science Research* 33, 3 (September 2004): 464-97. [Children of the NLSY79]

Cameron, Stephen V., and Christopher Robert Taber, "Estimation of Educational Borrowing Constraints Using Returns to Schooling," *Journal of Political Economy* 112, 1, part 1 (February 2004): 132-82. [NLSY79]

Caputo, Richard K., "Early Education Experiences and School-to-Work Program Participation," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 30, 4 (December 2003): 144-56. [NLSY97]

Caputo, Richard K., "Women Who Die Young: The Cumulative Disadvantage of Race," *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 19, 1 (Spring 2004): 10-23. [Young Women]

Cawley, John, "The Impact of Obesity on Wages," *The Journal of Human Resources* 39, 2 (Spring 2004): 451-74. [NLSY79]

Frey, Meredith C., and Douglas K. Detterman, "Scholastic Assessment or g?" *Psychological Science* 15, 6 (September 2004): 373-79. [NLSY79]

Gabriel, Paul E., "Differences in Earnings, Skills and Labour Market Experience Among Young Black and White Men," *Applied Economics Letters* 11, 6 (May 2004): 337-42. [NLSY79]

Gibson, Diane, "Long-Term Food Stamp Program Participation Is Differentially Related to Overweight in Young Girls and Boys," *Journal of Nutrition* 134, 2 (February 2004): 372-80. [Children of the NLSY79]

Hess, Gregory D., "Marriage and Consumption Insurance: What's Love Got To Do With It?" *Journal of Political Economy* 112, 2 (April 2004): 290-318. [NLSY79]

Lochner, Lance John, and Enrico Moretti, "The Effect of Education on Crime: Evi-

dence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports," *The American Economic Review* 94, 1 (March 2004): 155-89. [NLSY79]

Mouw, Ted, "Social Capital and Finding a Job: Do Contacts Matter?" *American Sociological Review* 68, 6 (December 2003): 868-98. [NLSY79]

Munasinghe, Lalith, and Karl Sigman, "A Hobo Syndrome? Mobility, Wages, and Job Turnover," *Labour Economics* 11, 2 (April 2004): 191-219. [NLSY79]

Neal, Derek A., "The Measured Black-White Wage Gap Among Women Is Too Small," *Journal of Political Economy* 112, 1, part 2 (February 2004): S1-S28. [NLSY79]

Parent, Daniel, "Incentives? The Effect of Profit Sharing Plans Offered by Previous Employers on Current Wages," *Economics Letters* 83, 1 (April 2004): 37-43. [NLSY79]

Rashad, Inas, and Robert Kaestner, "Teenage Sex, Drugs and Alcohol Use: Problems Identifying the Cause of Risky Behaviors," *Journal of Health Economics* 23, 3 (May 2004): 493-504. [NLSY79]

Ruhm, Christopher J., "Parental Employment and Child Cognitive Development," *The Journal of Human Resources* 39, 1 (Winter 2004): 155-92. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Stone, James R., III, "The Impact of School-to-Work and Career and Technical Education in the United States: Evidence From the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997," *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 54, 4 (December 2002): 532-74. [NLSY97]

Tobias, Justin L., and Mingliang Li, "A Finite-Sample Hierarchical Analysis of Wage Variation Across Public High Schools: Evidence from the NLSY and High School and Beyond," *Journal of Applied Econometrics* 18, 3 (May/June 2003): 315-47. [NLSY79]

Tobias, Justin L., and Mingliang Li, "Returns to Schooling and Bayesian Model Averaging: A Union of Two Literatures," *Journal of Economic Surveys* 18, 2 (April 2004): 153-81. [NLSY79]

Turner, Charlie G., and Elizabeth Monk-Turner, "Returns to Education and Degrees," *Educational Research Quarterly* 26, 3 (March 2003): 45-56. [NLSY79]

Votruba-Drzal, Elizabeth, "Income Changes and Cognitive Stimulation in Young Children's Home Learning Environments,"

Journal of Marriage and the Family 65, 2 (May 2003): 341-56. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Wilson, John, and Marc Musick, "Doing Well by Doing Good: Volunteering and Occupational Achievement Among American Women," *Sociological Quarterly* 44, 3 (Sum-

mer 2003): 433. [Young Women]

Zavodny, Madeline, "Technology and Job Separation Among Young Adults, 1980-98," *Economic Inquiry* 41, 2 (April 2003): 264-78. [NLSY79] □

Are You Working With NLS Data?

If you are, we are interested in your work!

- Have you received funding to sponsor a project using NLS data?
- Are you working on a paper that uses NLS data?
- Have you published a recent paper using NLS data?

If you have received funding on a project, are working on a paper, or published a recent paper that uses NLS data, please contact: NLS User Services, Center for Human Resource Research, 921 Chatham Lane, Suite 100, Columbus, OH 43221; (614) 442-7366; e-mail: usersvc@postoffice.chrr.ohio-state.edu. Or use our online submission form—just go to www.nls.bibliography.org and click on "Submit Citation."

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NLS News is published quarterly by the 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.

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