

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

NLS Summer Workshops: Applications Now Being Accepted

Two NLS-related research workshops will be held in Columbus, Ohio, July 13–15, 2009. These workshops will run concurrently. The *General NLS Workshop* is designed to help train researchers, primarily advanced graduate students and recent Ph.D.s, to use data from the seven NLS cohorts to study issues related to demography and health, as well as general NLS topics. The *NLS Young Adult & Child Workshop* focuses on understanding and using the NLSY79 Young Adult cohort and has been made possible through a grant from the National Institutes of Health. The General Workshop will end after lunch on July 15, while the Young Adult and Child Workshop will continue through the end of that afternoon. These NLS workshops follow up on similar workshops presented in 2004, 2005, and 2007 that generated substantial interest in the research community.

Topics for both workshops will include cohort structure, completion rates, sampling, interview content, data access, and data documentation. Participants will gain a more thorough understanding of how the NLS surveys measure fertility, marriage, cohabitation, race, ethnicity, household and family composition, location, migration, attitudes, and health status.

Attendance for the workshops is limited and will be determined through a selection process once applications are received. For more information and to receive an application for either of the workshops, go to the Ohio State University Web site <http://chrr.osu.edu/workshops2009/index.html>. Applications for both workshops must be received by May 8, 2009. □

NLSY79 Celebrates 30th Birthday

Thirty years ago this year, data collection began for the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979. That year, 12,686 men and women born during the years 1957 through 1964 were interviewed for the first survey. Since that time, the NLSY79 cohort has been reinterviewed regularly—annually from 1979 to 1994 and biennially from 1996 to 2008, for a total of 23 times. Data for rounds 1 through 22 are now available; data for round 23 will be released in April 2010. Round 22 collected data from 7,654 members of the cohort, or 80 percent of the eligible respondents. (The original sample included supplemental samples of active military and economically disadvantaged non-Black/non-Hispanic youths; both of these groups had been dropped from the original sample by 1991.) Survey respondents were ages 14 to 22 when first interviewed in 1979; in round 22 (2006), the men and women in the sample were ages 41 to 50.

The U.S. Department of Labor selected the NLSY79 cohort to replicate the NLS of Young Women and the NLS of Young Men, which began in the 1960s. As with the original cohorts, the NLSY79's primary focus has been labor force behavior, but the content also includes detailed questions on education, training, income and assets, health and physical condition, marital and family characteristics, attitudes, and military experiences. In addition, the full Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) was administered to 94 percent of the sample respondents in 1980. Interviews and assessments of the children of the NLSY79 female respondents began in 1986, providing researchers with an even richer body of information. (See the NLSY79 Child and Young Adult Survey

for more information.)

The following is a recent snapshot of the NLSY79 cohort, based on information provided by respondents participating in round 22 (note that, because the percentages presented here are not weighted, they are not representative of all Americans in this age cohort; however, if a user weights the data, the weighted numbers are representative thereof):

- *Employment.* In round 22, 79 percent of the respondents reported being employed at the time of the interview, 3.6 percent were looking for work, 5.3 percent were disabled, 0.7 percent were on layoff, 0.3 percent were active military personnel, 0.2 percent were retired, and the rest (slightly more than 10 percent) reported being out of the labor force for other reasons. Of those respondents working, approximately 9 percent reported working a second job.
- *Family income.* Total net family income (TNFI) and family poverty status (POVSTATUS) variables were created on the basis of income data collected in round 22 for the year prior to the interview. For the TNFI income variable, 11 percent of respondents reported an annual family income of less than \$10,000, 12.8 percent reported income between \$10,000 and \$25,000, 23.2 percent were in the \$25,000-to-\$50,000 range, 32.4 percent had income between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and 20.5 percent reported income above \$100,000. The POVSTATUS variable classifies almost 15 percent of the respondents' households as being in poverty for the year prior to the interview. Poverty status is based on government poverty income guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (www.hhs.gov).
- *Marriage and children.* Approximately 57 percent of the respondents reported

being married at the time of the interview; 18.5 percent were divorced, 5.2 percent separated, and 1.4 percent widowed. Nearly 18 percent of the respondents had never been married, and 81 percent reported having at least one biological child.

- **Education.** Approximately 43 percent of the respondents had completed high school, 36 percent had completed 4 years of college, and 10 percent had completed 5 or more years of college. Around 8 percent of the respondents reported completing more than 8th grade, but less than 12th grade; and 3 percent reported completing 8 grades or less. (See the created variable Highest Grade Completed, HGCREV06.)
- **Volunteerism.** Close to 25 percent of the respondents indicated that they had performed unpaid volunteer work in some capacity during the 12 months prior to the round-22 interview. Volunteer efforts included working for churches, hospitals or clinics, schools, political organizations, charitable organizations, youth groups, civic or community action groups, and social and welfare organizations, as well as working independently. During the weeks when respondents did volunteer work, 75 percent worked 9 or fewer hours a week, 11 percent worked 10 to 19 hours, 8 percent worked 20 to 39 hours, and around 5 percent worked 40 or more hours.
- **Alcohol consumption.** Approximately 52 percent of the respondents reported having at least one alcoholic beverage in the 30 days prior to the round-22 interview. Of those respondents who drank, 26.8 percent reported having one drink, 35 percent reported two drinks, 17 percent reported three drinks, 8.7 percent reported four drinks, and 12.4 percent reported averaging five or more drinks, on the days that they drank.
- **Dietary habits.** At the time of the interview, approximately 47 percent of the respondents reported that they were trying to lose weight; 26 percent said that they were trying to maintain their current weight, and 3 percent reported trying to gain weight. The remaining 23 percent were not trying to do anything about their weight. A related variable indicates that about 47 percent of the respondents always or often read the label for nutritional information when considering the

purchase of a new food item.

- **Urban vs. rural location.** Sixty-eight percent of the round-22 respondents were classified as living in an urban area and 27 percent lived in rural areas. (The remaining 5 percent could not be classified as either.)
- **Mortality.** As of round 22, 478 of the respondents have been reported as deceased.
NLSY79 main-file data, Child data, and Young Adult data, as well as supporting documentation, can be accessed free of charge via Web Investigator on the Web at www.nlsinfo.org/web-investigator. Users can obtain additional geocode data by completing the agreement required by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (Geocode data information can be found on the “Obtain Data” page at www.bls.gov/nls.) □

The Health of the NLSY97 Respondent

The NLSY97 data set offers several categories of health-related variables to provide information regarding the physical and mental health of the NLSY97 respondent. Health issues and health habits can affect a respondent’s short-term and long-term labor market experiences. As this cohort matures, it can be expected that respondents will receive a wider range of health-related questions in their interviews.

General Health Variables

In each survey round, the respondents provide their approximate height (YSAQ-000A) and weight (YSAQ-000B), a description of their weight (degrees of being underweight, overweight, or the right weight), and what, if anything, they have been doing to change their weight (YSAQ-373 and YSAQ-374). In addition, in the *Parent Questionnaire* in round 1, the responding parent provided his or her own height and weight. (Note to users: The questions on height and weight appeared in the health section until round 6 and had the names YHEA-2050, YHEA-2100, and YHEA-2200). Respondents also have answered questions about going through puberty and the onset of menstruation. Finally, in each round respondents answer the question, “In general, how is your health?” (YHEA-100). The mortality rate

for respondents can be determined starting in round 2 by using information found in the Reason for Noninterview (RNI) variables.

Chronic Health Condition Variables

In round 1, the parent of the NLSY97 youth respondent answered a series of questions about any chronic health issues the youth had, including asthma, heart conditions, anemia, diabetes, cancer, epilepsy, infectious diseases, kidney problems, and allergies. The parent also indicated whether the youth had any sensory problems (seeing, hearing, or speaking limitations), suffered from any learning or emotional problems, or was missing any limbs. For each health condition listed, the parent provided information about when the condition was first noticed and to what extent the condition limited the respondent. (See PC9-001 through PC9-039.)

In round 6, the respondents themselves answered a similar set of questions on chronic health conditions, together with questions about sexually transmitted diseases (YHEA-1010 through YHEA-1399). The round-11 data set, to be released later in 2009, also includes the chronic health condition series.

Mental Health Variables

Respondents answered a series of mental health questions in rounds 4, 6, 8, and 10. This series (YSAQ-282C through YSAQ-282G) asks them how often during the month before the interview they felt very nervous, calm and peaceful, downhearted and blue, happy, or depressed. Respondents use a four-point scale to rate the frequency of their feelings. The questions are a five-item short version of the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) first developed in the late 1970s.

Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Childbirth Variables

In the self-administered portion of each survey round, respondents answered questions on age of first intercourse and number of sexual partners. Starting in round 4, they indicated whether they had engaged in any risky sexual behaviors, such as sex with a stranger or sex with an IV drug user (YSAQ-307A and YSAQ-307B). Each

round gathered information on whether the respondent used birth control and, if so, the type of birth control and the frequency of its use. The number, sex, and ages of biological children born to respondents were recorded, as were the number and outcome of pregnancies not ending in live births.

The round-1 and round-6 surveys measured the respondents' knowledge of pregnancy and contraception by having them give their opinions about what birth control method best prevents pregnancy, what method best prevents sexually transmitted diseases, and during what part of the menstrual cycle pregnancy is most likely to occur. (See YHEA-1550 through YHEA-1700.)

Healthy Habits Variables

In round 1, respondents who were 13 years old answered a series of questions about health-related habits such as eating breakfast, eating vegetables or fruit, exercising, and wearing a seatbelt (YHEA-100 through YHEA-800). In round 6, respondents of all ages answered another set of questions about their health habits, including vegetable and fruit intake, frequency of exercise, how many hours per week they watched television and used the computer, how much sleep they got per night, and how many times they had driven under the influence of alcohol (YHEA-500A through YHEA-820). These variables also will be part of the round-11 data set.

Alcohol, Cigarette, and Drug Use Variables

All survey rounds of the NLSY97 have gathered data on a respondent's alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use. In the self-administered section of the questionnaire, respondents answered questions about the age of their first use of these substances, as well as their monthly and daily frequency of use. Starting in round 2, they also provided information about their use of harder drugs, such as cocaine and heroin.

Traumatic Health-Related Incident Variables

In round 6, respondents provided a 5-year retrospective on traumatic events in their lives, such as being a victim of a violent crime; being homeless; the hospitalization,

imprisonment, long-term unemployment, or death of any close relatives; and parents getting divorced. (See YHEA-2310 through YHEA-3030.) This series also will be included in round-11 data.

Medical Visit Variables

Beginning in round 6, respondents have reported how many times in the past year they were treated by a doctor or nurse for an injury or illness. They also report how many times they missed work because of an injury or accident, but did not see a doctor or nurse (YHEA-1880 and YHEA-1890). In rounds 6 and 7, respondents estimated how long it had been since they had had a routine checkup. Beginning in round 8, respondents have indicated whether they have had a routine checkup in the past year (YHEA-1940A). In round 11, to be released later this year, respondents answered questions about hospitalizations over the past 5 years.

Health Insurance Coverage Variables

In round 1, the parent of the youth respondent was asked whether the youth was covered under a health or insurance plan. (Independent youths were asked the question themselves.) Starting in round 6, respondents have answered questions about current health insurance coverage and whether there had been any time since the date of the last interview when they had or had not been covered by health insurance (YHEA-1910 through YHEA-1930). In rounds 9 and 10, respondents also indicated the source of their primary health plan (YHEA-1912).

Accessing NLSY97 Health Variables

NLSY97 health-related variables can be found by searching the "Health," "Substance Use," or "Sexual Activity" Area of Interest in the Web Investigator, accessed through the NLS Web site at www.nlsinfo.org/web-investigator. □

Bibliography Reaches 6,000+ Citations

Users can now find more than 6,000 NLS-related research citations in the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* through the NLS Web

site at www.nlsbibliography.org. In January 2009, the official count of NLS-related citations was up to 6,025. Category tallies at that time included the following:

- 257 chapters
- 2,535 journal articles
- 1 piece of legislation
- 75 master's theses
- 201 monographs
- 163 newspaper articles or mentions
- 904 conference presentations
- 758 Ph.D. dissertations
- 301 reports
- 2 Web casts
- 828 working papers

Citations generally include an abstract and listing details, stating, among other things, which NLS cohorts were used for the analysis. Researchers are encouraged to share information about their own NLS-related research by going to the bibliography Web site. □

2009 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 will be released by early August of 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 September 2009.
- The NLSY79 main survey began as an annual survey in 1979 and then became a biennial survey in 1996. To date, 22 rounds of data have been released to the public. Round-23 NLSY79 interviews commenced in January 2008 and will come out of the field in spring 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. □

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. Does the NLSY79 offer any variables on parental mortality?

A1. The NLSY79 provides information in the Health Module 40 & Over section about whether the biological mother and father of the respondent are alive or deceased. If a parent is deceased, the respondent cites the cause of death and the age of the parent at the time of death. The respondent also lists any major health problems his or her parents have (if still living) or had (if deceased). (See question numbers H00016.00 through H00027.00.) In round 1 (1979), respondents answered the questions “Is your mother living at this time?” (R00067.00) and “Is your father living at this time?” (R00081.00). In addition, questions about parental mortality were asked in the Health Module 50 & Over section in round 23, which will be available for public access in 2010.

Q2. Are there any variables available in the NLSY97 to determine the validity of an interview (that is, the likelihood that the respondent was providing correct answers)?

A2. The NLSY97 survey rounds contain a variety of Interviewer Remarks variables that include subjective information about the respondent as well as any special circumstances accompanying the interview. For instance, an interviewer provides information on the respondent’s level of cooperation, general understanding of the questions, and candidness or honesty. Among the special circumstances that the interviewer records are those which may affect a respondent’s answer, such as a physical or mental handicap, a poor command of English, illiteracy, impairment due

to alcohol or drugs, and a lack of social skills. In addition, the interviewer notes who else was present during the interview, where the interview was conducted, and any perceived environmental distractions. A researcher may choose to use the interviewer’s remarks to infer validity for a questionable case.

Q3. In the NLSY97, why is the 2006 survey year labeled as such in Web Investigator when so many of the interviews for that survey round appear to have taken place in 2007?

A3. The NLSY97 surveys occur annually and go to the field late in the calendar year. To avoid confusion with the next round, a decision was made to name the survey years for the calendar year that a particular survey round first went into the field for interviewing. The interviews for the round-10 survey for the NLSY97 started in October 2006 and continued through mid-summer 2007. Users should be aware, then, that a respondent could be interviewed at the beginning of a given year for one survey round and then interviewed at the end of that same year for the next survey round. The created variable CV_INTERVIEW_DATE may prove helpful for many analyses.

Q4. Are there any variables in the NLSY97 that indicate whether a respondent lives in a single-parent family?

A4. The NLSY97 does not have a specific variable that identifies a single-parent family. However, the household composition information gathered for each respondent provides the wherewithal to create such a variable. Each round has a set of variables that identifies each household member’s relationship to the respondent. For round 1, use the HHI2_RELX.xx variables; for rounds 2–10, use the HHI_RELX.xx variables.

Q5. In Web Investigator, is it possible to download the entire collection of NLSY data rather than going through the various filters?

A5. A major strength of an NLSY data set is its behemoth size. The data set for rounds 1–10 of the NLSY97, for instance, contains more than 130,000 variables. Web Investigator is not capable of extracting such a

large volume of variables, because it was designed instead to help users navigate the complex data and focus their searches for variables. For best results, use the filters to limit the number of variables to a maximum of about 2,000 per extraction. □

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):

Agee, Mark D., Atkinson, Scott E., and Crocker, Thomas D. “Multiple-output Child Health Production Functions: The Impact of Time-varying and Time-invariant Inputs.” *Southern Economic Journal* 75,2 (Oct 2008): 410–428. [Children of the NLSY79]

Apel, Robert John, Bushway, Shawn, Paternoster, Raymond, Brame, Robert, and Sweeten, Gary. “Using State Child Labor Laws to Identify the Causal Effect of Youth Employment on Deviant Behavior and Academic Achievement.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 24,4 (December 2008): 337–362. [NLSY97]

Atkins, Robert L. “Association of Childhood Personality on Sexual Risk Taking During Adolescence.” *Journal of School Health* 78,11 (November 2008): 594–600. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Bernal, Raquel. “The Effect of Maternal Employment and Child Care on Children’s Cognitive Development.” *International Economic Review* 49,4 (November 2008): 1173–1209. [NLSY79, Children of the NLSY79]

Boynton-Jarrett, Renée, Ryan, Louise M., Berkman, Lisa F., and Wright, Rosalind J. “Cumulative Violence Exposure and Self-Rated Health: Longitudinal Study of Adolescents in the United States.” *Pediatrics* 122,5 (November 2008): 961–970. [NLSY97]

Chandra, Anita, Martino, Steven C.,

Collins, Rebecca L., Elliott, Marc N., Berry, Sandra H., Kanouse, David E., and Miu, Angela. "Does Watching Sex on Television Predict Teen Pregnancy? Findings From a National Longitudinal Survey of Youth." *Pediatrics* 122,5 (November 2008): 1047–1054. [NLSY97]

Chou, Shin-Yi, Rashad, Inas, and Grossman, Michael. "Fast-Food Restaurant Advertising on Television and Its Influence on Childhood Obesity." *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 51,4 (November 2008): 599–618. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY97]

Cunha, Flavio, and Heckman, James J. "Formulating, Identifying, and Estimating the Technology of Cognitive and Noncognitive Skill Formation." *The Journal of Human Resources*, 43, 4 (Fall 2008): 738–782. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY97]

Dickerson, Niki. "Occupational and Residential Segregation." *Labor Studies*

Journal 33,4 (December 2008): 393–411. [NLSY79]

Gassanov, Margaret A., Nicholson, Lisa M., and Koch-Turner, Amanda. "Expectations to Marry Among American Youth: The Effects of Unwed Fertility, Economic Activity, and Cohabitation." *Youth and Society* 40,2 (December 2008): 265–288. [NLSY97]

Jokela, Markus, Kivimäki, Mika, and Elovainio, Marko. "Lower Fertility Associated with Obesity and Underweight: The U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth." *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 88,4 (October 2008): 886–893. [NLSY79]

Lichter, Daniel T., and Qian, Zhenchao. "Serial Cohabitation and the Marital Life Course." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70,4 (November 2008): 861–878. [NLSY79]

Liu, Haiyong. "A Migration Study of

Mother's Work, Welfare Participation, and Child Development." *Labour* 22,1 (March 2008) 23–71. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY97]

Mossakowski, Krysia N. "Dissecting the Influence of Race, Ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Status on Mental Health in Young Adulthood." *Research on Aging* 30,6 (November 2008): 649–671. [NLSY79]

O'Halloran, Patrick L. "Gender Differences in Formal On-The-Job Training: Incidence, Duration, and Intensity." *Labour: Review of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations* 22,4 (December 2008): 629–659. [NLSY79]

Rodgers, Joseph, Bard, David, Johnson, Amber, D'Onofrio, Brian, and Miller, Warren. "Cross-Generational Mother-Daughter-Aunt-Niece Design: Establishing Validity of the MDAN Design with NLSY Fertility Variables." *Behavior Genetics* 38,6 (November 2008): 567–578. [Children of

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, The Ohio State University, 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.nlsbibliography.org and click on "Submit Citation." □

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.

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