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Obesity-Related Variables in the NLS

Given the current obesity health crisis in the United States, it's no surprise that obesity-related research is gaining interest among NLS data users.

A search of the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* shows that between 2008 and 2012, the number of NLS-related research citations on obesity issues rose to an average of nearly 30 citations per year (out of an average total of 315 yearly citations for that period). This number is nearly double the average of 16 citations per year between 2003 and 2008. From 1998 to 2003, there was an average of five obesity-related citations a year. Prior to 1990, there were no obesity citations at all listed in the bibliography.

Researchers in 2012 paired obesity with such topics as neighborhood context, parental marital disruption, food stamp receipt, family income, wage penalties, age of menarche of daughters, childbearing, bankruptcy, credit risk, diabetes, adolescent sexual behavior, social status, parental employment, children's cognitive test scores, veteran status, and freshman college attendance. These citations and others can be found on the bibliography link (www.nlsbibliography.org) by searching with the keywords "obesity," "weight," and "body mass index."

Obesity-related variables can be found in all NLS cohort databases. These variables are especially helpful for researchers interested in mother and child pairings in the NLSY79 and the Children of the NLSY cohorts because it allows for the investigation of intergenerational correlations pertaining to obesity issues. A cohort-by-cohort listing of 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, YHEA-2100, YSAQ-000A, and YSAQ-000B.) Respondents describe their weight on a 5-point scale between very underweight to very overweight (YSAQ-373). They then report whether they are trying to lose weight, gain weight, maintain the same weight, or are doing nothing about weight (YSAQ-374). In round 1, biological parents of respondents reported their own weight and height (P4-004 through P4-006). Since 2006, NLSY97 respondents have provided their children's birth weights.

In several rounds, NLSY97 respondents also provided information on related variables about the level of regular exercise and the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Obesity-related variables in the NLSY79 cohort

NLSY79 respondents first reported their weight in 1981 and then in the majority of the subsequent survey rounds, including the latest round, released in 2010. (See T30247.00 in 2010.) Height was first reported in 1981 and then in several later rounds, in a variety of formats, including the latest round, from 2010. (See T30248.00 in 2010.) In recent years, respondents are asked whether they are trying to lose weight, gain weight, or maintain the same weight. (See T30272.00 in 2010.) Female respondents with children have given information on their weight before pregnancy and their weight at the time of delivery.

Recent survey years also include information on NLSY79 respondents' reported activity level and behavior related to nutrition.

Obesity-related variables in the Child & Young Adult cohort

The height and weight of children in the survey have been recorded in every round of the NLSY79 child survey. To record each child's weight and height, either the mother reports the figures or the interviewer weighs and measures the child. (See C40138.00.00 and C40127.00 in 2010.) Mothers also report on their children's birth weights as well as any personal weight gain or loss during their pregnancy.

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 television viewing habits, the amount of time spent playing video games, and whether they engaged in sports or a physical activity after school.

Since 1994, NLSY79 young adults (age 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. Starting in 2004, young adult respondents provided data on possible factors in obesity, such as their vegetable and fruit consumption, exercise, computer and video game usage, and amount of sleep. Questions about self-perception of weight and what respondents plan to do about their weight (also found in the NLSY97) were asked beginning in 2006.

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 to indicate their height in 1991 and their weight in 1991 and 1995. In the 2003 survey, both cohorts of women provided information about exercise.

The Young Men cohort 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 resurvey. (In that survey, living respondents and widows or other family members of deceased respondents were interviewed.) The older men answered questions about leisure time activities, including exercise, in 1978, 1981, and 1990.

Latest NLSY79 Release Features Philanthropy-Related Variables

The recently released Round-24 NLSY79 data (collected in the 2010 survey year) includes an extensive series of questions on the philanthropic habits of the NLSY79 respondent. This greatly expands the NLSY79's philanthropy-related variables; previously, NLSY79 respondents answered only a short series of questions on volunteerism. (See the 2006 survey year.)

The 2010 philanthropy module first asked respondents about the monetary aspects of giving. Respondents answered questions about any money donated by themselves or their spouses/partners to different types of organizations or causes: health care or medical research; schools and library; youth, neighborhood, or community organizations; arts or culture organizations; environmental organizations; international aid or world peace causes; organizations that help people in need of food or other essentials; religious or spiritual organizations; and umbrella organizations, such as the United Way. Respondents provided information about the amount of their donations, the number of donations, whether the donations were coordinated through the workplace, and whether the donation was matched by an employer.

The second part of the NLSY79 philanthropy module asked respondents questions about volunteer work. Volunteerism questions included how often respondents volunteered, the type of organization for which they volunteered, the amount of time spent, and whether any of the activities were organized through the workplace. If the volunteer work was initiated through the workplace, respondents reported whether any coworkers volunteered with them and if they received paid time off from work to volunteer. Respondents also indicated if the volunteer activity utilized any of their work skills, if the activity taught them new skills they could use at work, and if their volunteer work helped them to learn about job openings or job-related opportunities.

Tallies show that 4,169 NLSY79 respondents (out of a possible 7,565) reported donating at least $25 to a religious or not-for-profit organization, while 1,855 respondents participated in at least some sort of volunteer activity in the year before the survey. To access these variables, use "volunteerism" or "philanthropy" as the Area of Interest when searching in the NLS Investigator (www.nlsinfo.org/investigator).

Want to compare the philanthropic habits of NLSY79 respondents to other NLS cohorts? Variables about volunteering can be found in the NLSY97, the NLSY79 Young Adult, and the Children of the NLSY datasets as well as all of the Original Cohort datasets, except the Young Men. Limited information about monetary donations can be found in the NLSY97 dataset (rounds 9, 11, and the not-yet-released round 15) and the NLSY79 young adult dataset (2010 survey year).

Data Collection and Release Schedule

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

- **NLSY97 Survey**. Data from rounds 1 through 14 of the NLSY97 are now available. These data were collected in the survey years from 1997 through 2010. Round-15 data collection has been completed and is scheduled for release this summer. Round-16 NLSY97 fielding will begin later this year.

- **NLSY79 Main Survey**. Data from rounds 1 through 24 of the NLSY79 are available. These data were collected in survey years from 1979 through 2010. Round-25 data collection began in the latter part of 2012, with round-25 data scheduled for release in 2014. Round-26 fielding is currently scheduled to begin in 2014.

- **NLSY79 Child Survey and NLSY79 Young Adult Survey**. Both of these surveys are fielded

during approximately the same timeframe as the main NLSY79 survey. Data from survey years through 2010 are now available. The current round of data collection for the Child and Young Adult surveys began in the latter part of 2012 and data from this round will be released in 2014.

Each cohort's dataset includes a merger of all previously released rounds from that cohort. All public NLS data can be accessed free of charge at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator, which features data from the active cohorts listed earlier as well as the four NLS Original Cohorts: Older Men (1966–1990 survey years), Mature Women (1967–2003 survey years), Young Women (1968–2003 survey years), and Young Men (1966–1981 survey years).

NLS Job Satisfaction Variables

The level of satisfaction a worker has with his or her job can affect their length of employment, job performance, health, marital stability, parenting, and more. Researchers interested in studying job satisfaction variables will find data in all the NLS cohort databases.

Job satisfaction variables in the NLSY79

During each survey year from 1979 to 1992, NLSY79 respondents indicated how they felt about their current or most recent main job, also known as their Current Population Survey (CPS) job, using a scale from "like it very much" to "dislike it very much." This question provided a general indication of a respondent's current job satisfaction. This same job satisfaction question was asked from 1994 through the current survey year for each job held since the last interview (not just the current or most recent one).

During the 1979–1987 survey years, respondents working at a job in conjunction with participation in a federally funded employment and training program said how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with their entire experience in the job program. Respondents in the military also answered a job satisfaction question about armed forces enlistment during the 1979–1985 survey years.

During the 1979–1982 and 1988 surveys, wage and salaried workers, as well as the self-employed in incorporated businesses, heard a series of descriptive statements about their current job and rated the accuracy of each statement. Respondents indicated how satisfied they were with their physical surroundings and whether they had opportunities to use their best skills. They also responded to questions about on-the-job experience, job safety, salary, security, coworker friendliness, supervisor competency, and opportunities for promotion. A job satisfaction index can be constructed using these items. (See appendix 3 of the NLSY79 Codebook Supplement.)

In addition to direct questions about job satisfaction, each survey year NLSY79 respondents shared their main reason for leaving their former jobs. In recent survey years, these reasons included dissatisfaction with "job, boss, coworkers, pay, or benefits." In 1980–1985, respondents who had left the Armed Forces also selected the reasons for their departure, choosing from a list that included rank discrimination, better civilian jobs, family separation issues, and other military-specific reasons.

Job satisfaction variables in the NLSY97

In each of the NLSY97 survey years, respondents rated how they felt about each job they had since the last interview. For jobs that had ended, respondents were asked to state the main reason they left that job.

Job satisfaction variables in the Young Adult cohort

A job satisfaction variable was gathered in the 1994–1998 and 2004–2010 Young Adult surveys for all jobs. A job satisfaction variable was gathered in 2000 and 2002, but in both years it was only for the current or most recent job. For jobs that had ended, Young Adult respondents in 1994–1998 gave their main reason for leaving. If respondents served in the military, they answered a question in each Young Adult survey year about how satisfied they were overall with that branch of the Armed Forces.

Job satisfaction variables in the Original Cohorts

Several variables about job satisfaction are available for the Young Women, Mature Women, Older Men, and Young Men cohorts—known collectively as the Original Cohorts.

The Young Women indicated their attitudes toward their current jobs for select survey years between 1968 and 1988. They first answered the question: "How do you feel about the job you have now?," and they named three factors they most liked and three factors they most disliked about their jobs. In 1988, they also compared how they felt about a previous job with how they felt about their current job. Young women in 1980 answered an extended series of questions about job quality and satisfaction, some of which were used to create the Job Characteristics Index or the Job Satisfaction Index, which is similar to that used in the NLSY79. In addition, respondents named their ideal job. In each survey year, the Young Women cohort also provided their main reason for leaving a job.

The Mature Women cohort was asked in all surveys years to provide their attitudes toward their jobs. They also were asked why they left a job, if they had done so since the last interview. In 1992, the respondents indicated to what degree their job

entailed autonomy, physical effort, and other characteristics, and whether it was harder to keep up with the job than it had been previously.

The Young Men respondents answered questions similar to the Young Women cohort. Questions about job attitudes and reasons for leaving a job were asked each year, and the cohort answered a larger series of questions about job characteristics in 1978.

In select survey years, the Older Men respondents provided their attitudes toward their current job as well as the reason why they left a job, if they had left a job since the last interview. In the early years of the survey, the respondents compared their attitudes between current and previous jobs. In 1990, the Older Men cohort was asked questions about their overall attitude toward all their years of employment, including job satisfaction and the single aspect that was most enjoyable about their work. In 1990, the widows of deceased respondents also were asked a job satisfaction question.

Accessing job satisfaction variables and research citations

Find job satisfaction variables and related items by using the words "satisfaction" or "attitude" in the Word in Title search in the NLS Investigator (www.nlsinfo.org/investigator).

For research related to job satisfaction, researchers are encouraged to browse the *NLS Annotated Bibliography* at www.nlsbibliography.**org**. As of January 2013, the Bibliography lists 135 research citations using "job satisfaction" as a key word/phrase.

NLS Terms to Know: Geocode Data

In addition to accessing the extensive number of public variables found in the NLS public-use datasets (available at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator), researchers can also apply to use the restricted NLS data known as *geocode data*. The geocode data are geographic variables that, when combined with a respondent's public-use data, might create the risk of identification of respondents. Because of security reasons, only researchers based in the United States may apply for access to geocode data. The application process to gain access to geocode data varies by cohort.

For the NLSY79, NLSY97, and Young Adult cohorts, geocode variables include the respondent's state, county, and metropolitan areas of current residence, the state and county of the additional residences where the respondent has lived since the previous interview, the unemployment rate in the region of the respondent's current residence, and the FICE code for the colleges the respondent attended. (The FICE code is the six-digit institutional identifier assigned to higher education institutions by the Federal Interagency Committee on Education.) For more information on applying to use the NLSY79/NLSY97 geocode variables, go to http://www.bls.gov/nls/geocodeapp.htm.

Geocode variables for the Original Cohorts (Older Men, Young Men, Mature Women, and Young Women) vary. For the Older Men and Young Men cohorts, variables are available on the state and county of residence and on the primary sampling unit. For the Mature Women and Young Women cohorts, geocode variables include state, county, census tract and block, and the latitude and longitude of residence in each round of the surveys and of the Primary Sampling Unit. In addition, variables are available on the names and locations of colleges and universities that respondents attended. For more information about using Original Cohort geocode data, go to http://www.bls.gov/nls/origcohortgeo.htm.

Besides the geocode variables, additional restricted variables are available. These data files, available for use only at the BLS National Office in Washington, DC, include ZIP Code and census tract files (NLSY79 and NLSY97 respondents) and data from the 1996 and 2000 NLSY97 School Surveys. Researchers interested in learning more about using these data can find information at http://www.bls.gov/bls/blsresda.htm.

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. Regarding the NLSY97 "highest degree ever" created variable, specifically, R25640, could you explain the reason this particular variable has the word "edited" in its question title?

A1. Initially, the highest degree variables were created at each survey point, looking at prior rounds to resolve questions. The edited version is part of a larger effort (along with the highest grade completed and a few other variables) to look at each respondent's educational history, going both forward and backward in time to make sure the variables were consistent. For example, the histories of people who reported a highest degree of a BA and then at a later round reported a highest degree of only a high school degree were examined more closely to see whether the BA was valid. Generally, researchers should use the edited version of a variable for the most accurate data.

Q2. For NLSY97 respondent incarcerations in adult correctional institutions, why do the numbers seem unusually low for some survey years? I'm looking at Round 8 in particular.

A2. Prison interviews are inherently very difficult interviews to obtain. More resources were available for getting those interviews in some years than others, so that is part of the reason for the variation. Round 8 occurred at a time when it was becoming more difficult to gain access to various prison facilities. We have achieved better success in more recent rounds because the multistep consent process is started at a much earlier point in the field period.

To determine whether an interview was completed while an NLSY97 respondent was incarcerated, see the "Reason for Non Interview – Case Disposition" variables (Question name=RNI).

Q3. I'm working on an NLSY79 analysis in which I'd like to include the CES-D (Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale) variables. I can find those for 1992 and 1994, but the Users Guide says these questions were asked in subsequent years as well. Can you help me locate them?

A3. The CES-D questions were included in the NLSY79 40+ and 50+ health modules. Beginning in 1998, respondents age 40 or older were administered Health Module 40 & Over, then again in 2000 for respondents age 40 or older who had not previously answered these questions, and so on. Respondents answered these questions only once as they turned age 40. The process is now repeating, beginning with the 2008 survey, as respondents are turning age 50. To locate these variables, see the "Health Module 40 & Over" and "Health Module 50 & Over" areas of interest. Notice the "source year," which indicates the survey year the questions were administered.

Q4. The number of child interviews (Children of the NLSY) goes up every year until 2008. Then it starts dropping off. Can you explain why this is the case?

A4. One reason the number of children has decreased in the more recent survey years is because they are aging into the Young Adult questionnaire. Another reason: the mothers are aging (as of the 2010 survey year, the youngest NLSY79 respondents are in their mid-40s), and thus there are very few new children. Also, specific to 2010, the number of children is lower because we interviewed fewer mothers. Children are interviewed when they are with their mother, and since the number of interviewed mothers is down for 2010, so is the number of children.

Q5. I'm interested in knowing more about the Parent Interview, given to parents of NLSY97 youth. Did both parents receive the survey? Did all parents receive all questions?

A5. During the initial survey year (1997), one parent of each NLSY97 youth respondent was asked to participate in the Parent Interview. To determine which parent was surveyed, a list was created with a preferred order based on the relationship with the child. For example, a biological mother was chosen before a biological father (the list can be found in the Interview Methods section of the NLSY97 Users Guide). Some parents refused to be interviewed or were unavailable, so some youths will not have Parent Interview data for that reason. Also, if the youth did not live with a parent-type figure, no parent was interviewed and thus that youth's record will not contain any Parent Interview information.

Not all sections of the Parent Questionnaire were completed by all parents. Some sections were answered only if the child (the youth respondent) was of a certain age.

Q6. I'm trying to work with some NLSY data I've downloaded and have created an SPSS dataset. However, it doesn't seem to come with value labels. Am I missing something?

A6. The value labels are included in the SPSS syntax file, filename.sps. However, the value labels command has been commented out. Find the value labels command in the syntax file and delete the asterisk (*) on that statement, then run the syntax again. Value labels used in the syntax are generated from the codebook. When we create the labels for the codebook, we do not necessarily comply with the limitations of SPSS, so beware that some labels will generate SPSS warnings.

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.)

Aughinbaugh, Alison Aileen. "The Effects of High School Math Curriculum on College Attendance: Evidence from the NLSY97." *Economics of Education Review* 31,6 (December 2012): 861-870. [NLSY97]

Baird, Chardie L. "Going Against the Flow: A Longitudinal Study of the Effects of Cognitive Skills and Gender Beliefs on Occupational Aspirations and Outcomes." *Sociological Forum* 27,4 (December 2012): 986-1009. [NLSY79]

Blau, David M. and Wilbert van der Klaauw. "What Determines Family Structure?" *Economic Inquiry*, 51,1 (January 2013): 579-604. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Chia, Yee Fei. "Dollars and Pounds: The Impact of Family Income on Childhood Weight." *Applied Economics* 45,14 (2013): 1931-1941. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Chyi, Hau and Orgul Demet Ozturk. "The Effects of Single Mothers' Welfare Use and Employment Decisions on Children's Cognitive Development." *Economic Inquiry* 51,1 (January 2013): 675-706. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Crosswhite, Jennifer M. and Jennifer L. Kerpelman. "Parenting and Children's Self-Control: Concurrent and Longitudinal Relations." *Deviant Behavior* 33,9 (October 2012): 715-737. [Children of the NLSY79]

Davis, Jeff. "Perceived Environmental Threats as a Factor in Reproductive Behavior: An Examination of American Youth." *Evolution and Human Behavior* 33,6 (November 2012): 647-656. [NLSY97]

Fomby, Paula and Christie A. Sennott. "Family Structure Instability and Mobility: The Consequences for Adolescents' Problem Behavior." *Social Science Research* 42,1 (January 2013): 186-201. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Frech, Adrianne and Sarah Damaske. "The Relationships between Mothers' Work Pathways and Physical and Mental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 53,4 (December 2012): 396-412. [NLSY79]

Junker, Brian, Lynne Steuerle Schofield, and Lowell J. Taylor. "The Use of Cognitive Ability Measures as Explanatory Variables in Regression Analysis." *IZA Journal of Labor Economics* 1,4 (October 2012). [NLSY97]

Kalist, David E. and Freddy Siahaan. "The Association of Obesity with the Likelihood of Arrest for Young Adults." *Economics and Human Biology* 11,1 (January 2013): 8-17. [NLSY97]

Kaestner, Robert, Anthony Lo Sasso, Kevin Callison, and Benjamin Yarnoff. "Youth Employment and Substance Use." *Social Science Research* 42,1 (January 2013): 169-185. [NLSY97]

Kosteas, Vasilios D. "The Effect of Exercise on Earnings: Evidence from the NLSY." *Journal of Labor Research* 33,2 (June 2012): 225-250. [NLSY79]

Lindo, Jason M., Isaac D. Swensen, and Glen R. Waddell. "Alcohol and Student Performance: Estimating the Effect of Legal Access." J*ournal of Health Economics* 32,1 (January 2013): 22-32. [NLSY97]

Locay, Luis, Tracy L. Regan, and Arthur M. Diamond, Jr. "The Effects of Spanish-Language Background on Completed Schooling and Aptitude Test Scores." *Economic Inquiry* 51,1 (January 2013): 527-562. [NLSY79]

Loving, Ajamu C., Michael S. Finke, and John R. Salter. "Explaining the 2004 Decrease in Minority Stock Ownership." *The Review of Black Political Economy* 39,4 (December 2012): 403-425. [NLSY79]

Mamun, Arif A. "Cohabitation Premium in Men's Earnings: Testing the Joint Human Capital Hypothesis." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 33,1 (March 2012): 53-68. [NLSY79]

Miles, Jeremy N. V. and Margaret M. Weden. "Is the Intergenerational Transmission of Smoking From Mother to Child Mediated by Children's Behavior Problems?" *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* 14,9 (September 2012): 1012-1018. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Nichols, Emily Bever and Ann Booker Loper. "Incarceration in the Household: Academic Outcomes of Adolescents with an Incarcerated Household Member." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 41,11 (November 2012): 1455-1471. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Painter, Matthew A., and Jonathan Edward Vespa. "The Role of Cohabitation in Asset and Debt Accumulation During Marriage." *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 33,4 (December 2012): 491-506. [NLSY79]

Price, Joseph P. and Jeffrey Swigert. "Within-Family Variation in Obesity." *Economics and Human Biology* 10,4 (December 2012): 333-339. [Children of the NLSY79]

Sironi, Maria and Frank Furstenberg. "Trends in the Economic Independence of Young Adults in the United States: 1973–2007." *Population and Development Review* 38,4 (December 2012): 609-630. [NLSY79, NLSY97, Young Men, Young Women]

Thompson, Melissa and Christopher Uggen. "Dealers, Thieves, and the Common Determinants of Drug and Nondrug Illegal Earnings." *Criminology* 50,4 (November 2012): 1057-1087. [NLSY97]

Xie, Yu, Jennie E. Brand, and Ben Jann. "Estimating Heterogeneous Treatment Effects with Observational Data." *Sociological Methodology* 42,1 (August 2012): 314-347. [NLSY79]

Yörük, Ceren Ertan and Baris K.Yörük. "The Impact of Drinking on Psychological Well-Being: Evidence from Minimum Drinking Age Laws in the United States." *Social Science and Medicine* 75,10 (November 2012): 1844-1854. [NLSY97]

NLS News

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