

# NLS News



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## Call for Abstracts for a Conference on Data Quality Issues in Longitudinal Surveys

Several organizations are sponsoring a conference on data quality issues in longitudinal surveys. They include the Board of Overseers of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the Technical Review Committee of the National Longitudinal Surveys, and the Health and Retirement Study. The National Science Foundation (NSF), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) will fund the conference.

The main purpose of the conference is to advance basic research on data quality issues of particular relevance to household-level longitudinal surveys. It also is intended to serve as a vehicle to encourage researchers in the social sciences to address issues of data quality that have potentially significant consequences for research findings. It should also encourage survey methodologists to become more informed about the research potential of existing longitudinal surveys in the social sciences. Topics of interest should address methodological issues that have either a substantive social science connection with longitudinal data or that make use of unique features of specific longitudinal data sets.

Some of the topics to be given priority include:

- (1) Recall bias in retrospective questions, particularly as it relates to event history or spell data;
- (2) Measurement issues in the collection of consumption and asset data;
- (3) Validation of subjective questions having to do with preferences, expecta-

tions, attitudes, and hypothetical scenarios; and,

(4) The effects of interview and questionnaire characteristics on data quality, e.g., the relationship between interview mode or length, or question wording or placement on item non-response; response validity; and future attrition.

Also to receive some priority are papers that make use of the longitudinal data sets sponsored by NSF, BLS, or NIA. These data sets are the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, any of the cohorts of the National Longitudinal Surveys, the Health and Retirement Study, and the Asset and Health Dynamics Among the Oldest Old survey. Also encouraged are submissions using other U.S. and non-U.S. panel or longitudinal data sets.

The calendar for the selection process and completed papers is as follows:

- Abstracts are due **December 15, 1997**. A committee consisting of representatives from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics Board of Overseers, the Technical Review Committee of the National Longitudinal Surveys and the Health and Retirement Study will select authors by January 15, 1998. The committee will select about 12 papers for the conference, to last 1½ to 2 days. Abstracts should be three to four pages long. Publication of the papers as a conference volume or in an appropriate journal outlet is under consideration.
- The date for the conference is Fall 1998. Authors will have about 1 year to complete their papers. Participants and discussants will get copies of the papers before the conference. Presenters will receive travel and living expenses.

The deadline for abstracts is December

15, 1997. Please send them to: Kaarin Stahl 3200 ISR, University of Michigan, PO Box 1248, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48106-1248. You may send electronic mail to [KMSTAHL@ISR.UMICH.EDU](mailto:KMSTAHL@ISR.UMICH.EDU)

## NLSY97 on Schooling

In 1997, The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) interviewed a nationally representative sample of youth born during the years 1980-84. The survey is designed to document youths' transition from school to work and into adulthood. This new survey will collect extensive information on respondents' educational and labor market experiences over time. The target year for release of the data from round 1 of the NLSY97 is 1998.

This article focuses on the sections of the survey that record the educational experiences of the youth in this new cohort. When developing the schooling section of the NLSY97, the design team recalled the strengths and weaknesses of educational data collected in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). The schooling information found in the NLSY79 is quite comprehensive. Nevertheless, the NLSY97 design team implemented a number of changes to improve data quality and to increase the amount of information collected compared to that of the NLSY79. Thus, the resulting NLSY97 educational section reflects many of the same basic questions and ideas found in the NLSY79, allowing for cross-cohort comparisons. However, the NLSY97 also provides researchers with a more in-depth description of the youths' schooling experiences than the NLSY79.

This article first describes some key

conceptual differences between the NLSY79 and the NLSY97 schooling information. It then highlights the educational data available in the various sections of the NLSY97.

**Key differences between the NLSY79 and the NLSY97**

One major difference between the NLSY79 and the NLSY97 is the format in which school enrollment information is obtained. The NLSY79 asks for month-by-month information on the enrollment status of the youth (for the previous year). This information is not directly tied to a specific school. In contrast, the NLSY97 enrollment information is collected by school attended.

NLSY97 obtains data on between-school enrollment gaps, because a gap in an association with a particular school represents a gap in enrollment. The NLSY97 also collects information about gaps while enrolled at each school. The round 1 Parent Questionnaire asks the youth's parent whether the youth ever missed a month or more of each school attended since the 7<sup>th</sup> grade (not including summer vacations). (In the Parent Questionnaire, a complete school-specific history is obtained for each youth starting in 7<sup>th</sup> grade). For each absence, follow-up questions collect information on the length of the gap, the grade level(s) in which this occurred, and the reasons for that absence (for example, due to physical health problems). Youths are asked about school suspensions, their duration, and the grades in which they occurred. Parents of youths in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or higher are asked about academic courses the youths took during a non-enrollment period such as a school break. In rounds 2 and beyond, school-specific enrollment information will be asked in the Youth Questionnaire.

In many ways, the NLSY97 collects school enrollment data in a manner similar to the way it collects employment data. That is, the survey ties enrollment periods to each specific school (as work dates are tied to each employer in the employment section), obtains between-school gaps (and also between-employer gaps), and establishes within-enrollment gaps (as are within-employer gaps). (See Issue 97-90 of the *NLS News* for an article that dis-

cusses the employment section of the NLSY97.)

Another innovation in the NLSY97 is the way it collects information about progression through college. The NLSY79 asks about the number of credit hours ever earned at each college reported; however, it does not track detailed, term-by-term progression through college.

The NLSY97 asks youth respondents, for each college attended, about their degree plans and credits. Specifically, the NLSY97 wants to know the degree the student is working toward, the number of credits required to get the degree, the number of credits the respondent had upon entering that college, and how these credits were earned (e.g., transfer credits from other colleges, Advanced Placement (AP) credits from high school).

For each term, the respondent reports on enrollment in that college. Then, by term, the respondent also reports on the number of credits earned, the grade point average earned, and the hours per week classes met. The survey then computes total number of credits earned and number of credits still needed to obtain the degree. Future rounds of the survey will update this information.

A third innovation in the NLSY97 involves the technology used in the interview process. This technology (see below) helps to decrease inconsistencies within rounds and from one round to the other. For example, in the NLSY79 inconsistencies have arisen because some respondents reported their highest grade completed as lower than they reported in previous interviews. The computer technology now used will catch these differences.

The NLSY97 uses a Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) system, unavailable during the early years of the NLSY79. (A paper and pencil interviewing scheme was used in the NLSY79 prior to 1993.) In the NLSY97, the CAPI system is designed to increase quality and to decrease the number of inconsistencies through "bounded interviewing." (Bounding incorporates previous information from within and across interviews into questions. This allows the verification, correction, and updating of data with new information.)

For example, some youths may report

that they attend 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but have already completed 11<sup>th</sup>. The interviewer prompts them either to correct the information or to give a verbal explanation, which the interviewer then records. In this manner, the interviewer follows up answers inconsistent with questions about highest grade attended and completed occurring both within and between interview years. In addition, the CAPI is designed to re-interview youths in round 2 on many of the schooling questions that went unanswered in round 1 (e.g., refuse to answer, do not know).

NLSY97 contains many changes in the structure, types, and amount of educational questions asked. As a result, researchers will be able to construct a more complete picture of the youth's education than is possible in the NLSY79. A discussion of the types of information related to education available in the NLSY97 follows.

**Youth schooling information in the NLSY97**

Educational information about the youth in round 1 comes mainly from two questionnaires: The Parent Questionnaire, (1 hour long) is administered to the resident parent or guardian of the responding youth; the Youth Questionnaire, also 1 hour long, is administered directly to the youth. Youths who have not yet entered the 10<sup>th</sup> grade are asked to take the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT) Math Assessment during the youth interview. All NLSY97 youths have also been asked to take the computer adaptive version of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (CAT-ASVAB) during the summer and fall of 1997.

**Parent Questionnaire.** The Parent Questionnaire gathers both past and current information on youths' schooling experiences. It questions the parent about if and when the child participated in Head Start, as well as the age the youth entered first grade. The parent provides a detailed school-specific history for 7<sup>th</sup> grade and forward.

The parent is first asked for the name and location (State, city) of the school the youth attended beginning in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The interviewer then verifies the school's name and address using the "school finder,"

which is part of the CAPI system. The school finder is a record of the names and addresses of primary and secondary schools located in the United States. This is another innovation in the NLSY97. In the future, researchers with the NLSY97 Geocode files may be able to use matched school-level data merged in from other data sources, such as the QED (Quality Educational Data).

The parent then reports whether the youth missed one or more months of the school while enrolled, each grade it occurred, the duration, and the cause of the absence. The parent also provides information on whether the youth ever changed schools, and the year and grade the student left the former school. The parent then provides the name and location of the next school as the loop begins again until the parent has gone through the history of the youth's schools since 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

For the most recent school, the parent is asked if the school was assigned or selected. The parent is also asked if the youth ever repeated a grade and in which grade(s) that occurred, as well as whether the youth ever skipped ahead a grade and in which grade(s) that happened.

When a parent reports a youth in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or higher, he or she is asked whether that youth has ever taken an academic class during a school break. If the youth has, the parent is surveyed on the reason for that class (for example, to accelerate, make up the class). Next, that parent is asked about the youth's participation in any special courses or programs, including remedial English or math courses, bilingual/bicultural programs, special programs for the disabled, or gifted and talented programs. For each program reported, the responding parent is asked to state the grade level(s) that the youth participated in that class. A follow-up question determines the reason for taking this class.

Additional questions, also asked if the youth is in grade 9 or higher, include whether the youth has ever taken a standardized achievement test (for example, Scholastic Achievement Test I (SAT I), American College Test (ACT)). If the youth has taken one or more of these tests, the parent is asked about the grade level(s) that the youth took each test and the highest score that the youth ever received on

each type of test. The survey also gathers data on whether youths who are at least 16 years of age ever took and received credit for college courses and the years that this occurred.

**Youth Questionnaire.** The Youth Questionnaire focuses on current and recent schooling experiences, compared to the Parent Questionnaire which focuses on schooling history.

The youths' current enrollment status is the first question asked of them in the schooling section. Those who report that they were not enrolled are asked about their reason(s) for leaving school and the date at which this separation occurred. These youths are then asked for the name of the current or most recent school attended and the type of school (for example, middle school, high school). Using information from the school finder, the youth verifies the location of the primary or the secondary school. The youth are then asked to state the highest grade level attended and the highest grade level completed.

In addition, all youths are asked if they have ever been suspended from school. Those who say "yes" are asked to state the grade level(s) in which this occurred. The survey collects information on the duration of each suspension.

Youths who attended the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or higher are questioned on the overall marks they received in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (for example, mostly A's, about half A's and B's). They are also asked if they had ever taken a standardized achievement test (for example, SAT I, ACT). If they had, they are asked what grade level they were in when they took the test and the highest test score. Those enrolled in college or who are no longer enrolled in a regular school, are surveyed on the overall marks they received during high school.

In addition, the survey collects information on the course of study in high school (for example, college prep, vocational). Youths are also surveyed on the types of math, science, and other courses they took from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade through high school. For each math and/or science course reported, they are asked whether that course was an honor's course.

If a youth is currently enrolled in high

school, information is collected on the expected graduation date. Youths who are either enrolled in college, or who are not enrolled in school are asked whether they received a high school degree. Youths reporting that they received a high school diploma are then asked to provide the date the diploma was earned as well as the name of the high school granting the diploma. The school's location is verified using the school finder. Youths earning a GED also provide information on the date the GED was granted and from which State. A follow-up question establishes the type of program used to earn the GED.

Respondent youths who are not yet enrolled in college are asked whether their school has a day when adults come to talk about their jobs. Those reporting a highest grade attended of 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade are asked if they have ever participated in any school-based learning programs, such as job shadowing or cooperative education.

Youth are then surveyed on the most recent program's characteristics (for example, type of program, number of days or weeks spent at a work site). Those who report being paid for their participation in the program are asked to give the rate of pay. Other questions include whether the youth took any classes at the work site and whether the employer wrote an evaluation of the youth.

All youths who were enrolled in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade or lower during the fall of 1996 are asked a number of questions about that term. First, they are asked if they were involved in any incidents at school (for example, something of value stolen, someone threatened to hurt the youth). They are then questioned about the number of days they were absent from school during the fall term. Finally, these youths are surveyed on their attitudes toward teachers (for example, are teachers interested in students), and their perceptions of the school environment (for example, did disruptions by other students get in the way of learning, did they feel safe at school).

Although relatively few youths are enrolled in college during round I, the NLSY97 contains a number of questions that collect data about college experiences. In later interview rounds, similar questions will collect information for those who enter college after round I.

Each youth who reports being enrolled in college is asked for the total number of years at any 2-year colleges and at any 4-year colleges, and the number of different colleges attended.

Information is collected on the name of each college, whether the college was publicly supported, enrollment dates, type of diploma or degree sought, and the total credits required to graduate with that degree. The youth is also asked about the number of credits earned from outside of this college. Information is also collected on the grading scale used at the school and whether the school was on a semester, quarter, or trimester system.

For each term the youths report being enrolled at a college or university, they are asked for the number of credits taken and the number of credits earned. The survey also collects data on the youths' grade point average (GPA) and primary and secondary major in that term. In addition, youths are asked about any remedial English, writing, or math classes they may have taken. Questions are also asked about the total number of hours per week that classes met and the youth's full or part-time status.

The interviewer also asks the youths about the source(s) of financial aid received while at each college. Questions are also asked about aid received from relatives or friends. Follow-up questions ask for information on the amount of money the youth was not expected to repay and the amount owed as of the interview date. Other questions concern the financial assistance received from other sources (for example, grants, loans, work-study). For each source, data are collected on the amount received and the amount still owed by the youth. The youth is also asked to indicate the amount that he or she paid using earnings or savings.

**PIAT Math Test.** NLSY97 youths who were not yet enrolled in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade (as of the survey date) were given the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT) Math Assessment during the interview. This test will be repeated in subsequent rounds. Combined with information on the math courses that the youth took between rounds the test scores can potentially be used by researchers to assess the amount of material learned by the youth in the intervening

time. There is also a possibility of a series of surveys of the youths' math teachers in later rounds.

**CAT-ASVAB.** NLSY97 respondents took the computer adaptive version of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (CAT-ASVAB) as well as the "Interest Finder" during the summer of 1997. They will continue to do so in the fall.

The CAT-ASVAB consists of 12 separate tests measuring knowledge and skill in the following areas: Arithmetic reasoning, mathematical knowledge, word knowledge paragraph comprehension, assembling objects (a spatial test), general science, coding speed, automobile information, shop information, numerical operations, mechanical comprehension, and electronics comprehension.

The Interest Finder is designed to measure youth interests and occupational preferences. It is an interest inventory comprised of 6 sub-scales. This 240-item test surveys the youth on his or her interest in various activities or occupations.

#### **Educational attainment of youths' family members**

Information on the educational attainment of youths' family members is obtained in the household and non-resident rosters, as well as the Parent Questionnaire.

The household roster creates a list of the various members of the youth's household and also finds out their relationship to the youth. It also asks for educational information about members of the youths' household. Data on the highest grade level completed are collected for each household occupant. The household roster then gathers information about the highest degree received by the subset of household members above the age of 16.

The non-resident roster collects information on the youth's immediate family (for example, biological, adoptive, or step parent; full or half sibling; youth's spouse; youth's biological children) living elsewhere. In the non-resident roster, data are gathered on the highest grade level completed by the youth's non-resident family members. A follow-up question asks about the highest degree received by non-resident relatives who are over 16.

In the Parent Questionnaire, information is collected on the highest grade level completed by the responding parent's mother and father and the mother and father of his or her spouse or partner. If the youth has had contact with a non-resident parent since the age of 10, the responding parent is also asked to provide the highest grade level completed by the non-resident parent's mother and father.

#### **School survey**

Round I of the NLSY97 included a school survey. School administrators were asked to provide detailed data on the characteristics of the school, its staff, and the student body. Additional information on the school's general practices, graduation policies, and school-to-work programs was solicited as well.

In the fall of 1996, school survey questionnaires were sent to nearly 7,500 schools. These were public and private schools containing a 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and located in the primary sampling units (PSUs) associated with the NLSY97. Thus, the round I school survey is a "school census." Round II of the NLSY97 will include a school survey to be sent to all primary and secondary schools attended by NLSY97 youths. In later rounds, there is also the possibility of additional school surveys. In addition, the respondent's high school transcripts will be collected during later rounds of the NLSY97.

#### **NLS Topic Spotlight: Job Search**

This article highlights the information available on job search in five of the NLS cohorts: NLSY79, NLS Young Men, Older Men, Young Women, and Mature Women's Surveys.

In all survey rounds, the National Longitudinal Surveys contain a series of questions based on those in the Current Population Survey (CPS). The questions attempt to identify the labor force status of each respondent in the week before the survey. As part of this CPS series, respondents are asked about their job search activities during the prior 4 weeks. These questions are used in determining whether jobless respondents are unemployed (that is, using

active job search methods) or out of the labor force (that is, not looking for work or using passive methods). In addition to information on job search methods, the questions in the CPS section provide data on the reasons why respondents are or are not looking for a job, whether full or part-time work is desired, the occupation(s) sought, the length of search, and plans to search for jobs in the future.

Additional detailed information on job search activities is available for selected years and cohorts. Both types of data (CPS-based and additional) on job search are described, by cohort, below.

### **NLSY79 cohort**

The NLSY79 data follows individuals from their early years in the labor market (NLSY79 respondents were aged 14-22 in 1979), when they were experiencing many labor force transitions, up through 1994.

**CPS-based job search questions.** Before 1994, the first question asked in the CPS section was, "What were you doing most of last week?" The response categories included looking for work, working, going to school. Additional questions determine whether the respondent is employed, unemployed or out of the labor force. Specific job search questions are asked of each labor force group. Note that in 1994, the series of questions used to determine labor force status changed to reflect the revisions to the CPS. However, once the labor force status is assigned, questions on job search are similar to the pre-1994 questions.

Respondents classified as unemployed were asked why they were looking for work. Responses included "needed the money" (the most popular response), "lost job," "quit," "left school," "children were older," and "health improved." In all years, data are available on the amount of time that an unemployed respondent spends searching for work. From 1979-93, this information is available in weeks; in 1994, the respondent could report the length in weeks, months, or years. From 1979 through 1984, unemployed respondents were questioned on the type of occupation and number of occupations they sought (one type, more than one type, anything).

Currently employed workers were asked if they had been looking for 'other'

work in the last 4 weeks. From 1979 to 1984, these job seekers were asked the reason for conducting a job search and the number of weeks they had been looking for a job. As with the unemployed, these respondents were asked about the type and number of occupations they were seeking. Employed respondents not looking for work were asked if they intended to look for work in the next year and if so, in what occupations.

In all years, employed and unemployed job seekers were asked what they had been doing to find work. Job search methods included contacting State or private employment agencies, contacting the employer directly, talking with friends/relatives, placing/answering ads, looking in the newspaper, and contacting school employment services. They were also asked about whether they were looking for full- or part-time work (all survey years) and days per week and hours per day desired for work shift (1979-84 for employed respondents, 1982-86 for unemployed respondents).

NLSY79 respondents who were out of the labor force were asked in all years to state the reason they were not currently seeking a job. The answer categories included: Could not find work, lacked the necessary schooling, were in school or training, were pregnant, or do not know where to look. In the 1979-84 surveys, these respondents were asked if they planned to seek employment in the next 12 months. If so, information on the type and number of occupations sought was also collected.

**Additional job search questions.** To complement these CPS job search questions, more details about the nature of the job search were asked in selected survey years. The majority of the additional job search questions were fielded in 1981, 1982, 1986, 1987 and 1994. The questions provided more information on the use and efficacy of various job search methods and the factors affecting a respondent's ability to conduct a job search. In addition, in all survey years, the employer supplements of the NLSY79 contain information on the length of the job search. For each reported gap between jobs, interviewers asked respondents for

the number of weeks they were looking for work or on layoff from a job.

In 1981, respondents provided information on whether a particular job search method resulted in a job offer. They then gave some of the particulars of that offer (for example, pay, reason offer not accepted). In 1982, a question was asked about the helpfulness of the job search methods in finding the respondent's current position. Friends and/or relatives were cited most often as the search method that produced the best results.

Additional questions in 1986 and 1987 examined the job search methods even further. Respondents were asked about the number of job offers received as a result of the most often used search method; the search methods used during the past and most recent period of unemployment; and they were asked to provide a month-by-month breakdown of the methods used during each month of the job search (allowing for up to 12 months of job hunting).

In 1994, the NLSY79 interview included a segment on search methods that led to obtaining new jobs since the last interview. It also examined the methods resulting in job offers that the respondent did not take. Data on the highest rate of pay was also collected for the rejected job offers. NLSY79 respondents indicated that many jobs are found in a serendipitous fashion: in 1994 at least a quarter of the sample reported that they had not been actively looking when the job offer came.

To understand if child care concerns were a major reason for not seeking work, NLSY79 respondents not currently working were asked in 1982-84 whether they would be looking for work if satisfactory child care could be found. Those already employed were asked if they would be looking for a job with more hours if they could find satisfactory child care. In 1981-82, respondents were asked about whether they were looking for temporary or permanent work.

### **Original cohorts**

Information on job search from the NLS original cohorts provides insight into the employment and job search activities of the four different groups. When the younger cohorts began, members of both the National Longitudinal Surveys of

Young Men and Young Women were in their early 20s and in the process of completing school. Both groups were making decisions about obtaining additional schooling, entering the workforce, and beginning a family. The job search questions asked of these cohorts reflected those decision factors.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Older Men centered on a group of men who were mostly employed and some who were actively making decisions about retirement. These respondents were making job search decisions based on the timing and extent of their labor force withdrawal and their plans for retirement. Conversely, the job search choices made by respondents to the National Longitudinal Survey of Mature Women often reflected women who were reentering the work force and balancing the demands of homemaker, mother, and employee.

The CPS section in the original cohorts' surveys is similar to that found in the NLSY79. A brief summary of the standard questions precedes the description of questions specific to the individual cohorts. Researchers should note that not all of the standard questions appear for each cohort in each survey year; exceptions will be noted.

A respondent's labor force status is determined by the CPS question, "What were you doing most of last week?" Those who said that they had been actively seeking employment in the 4 weeks prior to the interview were considered unemployed. These respondents were usually asked about their job search methods, whether full or part-time work was desired, and the occupation they sought.

Members of the original cohorts who were designated as out of the labor force were usually asked if they planned to seek employment in the coming year. Those who said "yes," were asked for the month they intended to begin their search, the job search method they planned to use, and the occupation they desired. If they had no plans to seek employment, the respondents were asked to state the reason why.

In general, the original cohort surveys did not collect information on the current job search activities of employed respondents as is done in the NLSY79.

**Young men's and young women's surveys.** Respondents to the National Longi-

tudinal Survey of Young Men were interviewed regularly from 1966 to 1981, when it was discontinued. The National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women began in 1968 and continues today. In all years except 1973 and 1975, the standard CPS job search questions were asked of the young men. These questions were also asked in the young women's surveys except in 1975, 1977, 1980, and 1982. Unemployed respondents in the young men's survey were also asked about any restrictions they placed on a potential job's location and hours.

Respondents found to be out of the labor force in both cohorts were asked the standard questions on their plans for the following year. (In 1968, young women were asked about search plans for the next 6 months). In both surveys, a respondent who had been out of the labor force at the date of the previous interview, but was now employed, was asked, "At this time last year, you were not looking for work. What made you decide to take a job?" Answers included: Recovery from illness, boredom, education completed, or financial needs. These questions were asked of the young men in the 1967-71 surveys and of the young women during the 1969-73 and 1983 surveys.

In 1966, employed respondents in the young men's survey were asked what they would do if they lost their current job. If the respondent answered "look for work," the most popular response, they were asked additional questions about the occupation they would seek and the job-seeking methods they might use. Similarly, in 1968, employed respondents in the young women's cohort were asked a series of questions concerning the occupations they would seek employment in if they left or lost their job.

Employed respondents in both the young men's and young women's surveys answered a set of questions regarding alternative employment.<sup>1</sup> They were asked whether they had ever thought of seeking an alternative job, the occupation they desired, how often they had sought an alter-

<sup>1</sup> Alternative employment is a different primary job, not a secondary job. The questions were asked in 1971 and 1976 for the young men, and 1973 for young women.

native job, and whether they sought the job in the same geographic location where they now resided. Follow-up questions sought the reasons for seeking or not seeking alternative employment, the year(s) they sought this job, and whether they were offered an alternative job.

Sometimes moving to a new area can prompt a job search. The young men's cohort was asked in the 1967-71, and 1976 surveys about the total number of weeks they had looked for a job before finding one due to a change in residence. In 1971 and 1976, the young men were also asked additional information about how much of the total search time was done before the move. The young women's cohort was asked in the 1969-73 and 1978 surveys about the total number of weeks they had looked for a job before finding one due to a change in residence.

Many respondents in the young men's and young women's cohorts were students or recent graduates at the beginning of these surveys. As a result, in the initial survey year, they were asked about the methods used to find the job they held in the last year of high school and the first job after school.

During select surveys, young women were also asked about child care issues. In 1971, 1975, 1977-78, and 1983, interviewers asked if the lack of suitable child care made them unable to seek employment during the past year. They were also asked if they would look for a job if a child care center were available at no cost to them. In 1968 and 1983, the survey included questions on whether child care arrangements would be necessary for the respondent to go to work. Members of the young women's cohort were also questioned on the effect their spouse's labor force status had on their job search activities. Each married respondent was asked if her husband's unemployment caused her to seek employment (1980-91).

**Older men's survey.** Information on the NLS of older men was collected periodically from 1966 to 1990. At ages 45-60 (in 1966), job search activities were not expected to be as major a labor market activity for this group as they were for the younger cohorts.

Older men who were out of the labor

force were asked the standard questions in all survey rounds except 1968, 1973, and 1975. Questions on the occupation that the respondent would seek in the following year were asked in 1971, 1976, 1978, and 1980-81.

Those out of the labor force were also asked in 1978, 1980, 1981, and 1983 why they did not plan to seek full-time, year-round employment. Some of the reasons given for not working were: A salary would cut into their Social Security benefits, they did not want or need to work more, and their health would not permit working. In 1971, employed respondents were asked for details about any alternative job searches they may have conducted while still employed. These questions are similar to those found in the young men's surveys.

Some job search questions for the older men related directly to retirement issues. In all survey years but 1990, the older men were asked what they planned to do following their retirement. Respondents were asked in 1966, 1976, 1978, 1980, and 1983 about what type of occupation they might seek after retirement. If the respondents were retired, they were asked in 1983 if they planned to seek employment in the next year.

**Mature women's survey.** Mature women, ages 30-44 in 1967, were asked the standard questions about their labor force activity in some survey years. The surveys which did not include this information were: 1968, 1974, 1976, 1979, 1981, 1984, and 1986. Additionally, respondents who were out of the labor force were asked to specify the occupation they were seeking in 1971, 1972, 1977, and 1982. All respondents were questioned on alternative jobs sought during employment (1982) and any restrictions on the job sought (1967-82).

One child care question posed in 1972 of the mature women's cohort, sought information on the types of child care arrangements desired to enable the respondent to look for work. Answer categories included having: A relative or non-relative at home to care for the children, a non-relative in someone else's home, or a day care center.

Mature women respondents, like the

young women, were asked questions about their spouses' job searches in select survey years. In 1974-89, they were asked whether they looked for work as a result of their husbands' unemployment and whether any other family members had sought work because of his unemployment.

In 1972 and 1977, the mature women were also asked about the length of their own job searches in relationship to a change of residence, reporting the number of weeks looked before the move, after the move, and due to the move.

#### **Finding job search variables on NLS CD-ROMS**

Job search variables can be found on the data CDs by selecting from the following terms via the search engine: "SEEK," "SEEKING," "SEARCH," "SOUGHT," "FIND," "FOUND," "LOOK," and "LOOKING." To find questions about the methods used in a job search, select the word "METHOD(S)."

#### **Notice of Data or Documentation Updates and Errors**

##### **Nineteen child cases removed from the NLSY79 child database, 13 from the NLSY79**

After the 1994 NLSY79 survey was fielded, a reconciliation was conducted of the NLSY79 children's dates of birth as recorded in the NLSY79 main Youth FERTILE record type and the NLSY79 child database. In the process of resolving discrepancies, it was determined that 13 children either had been incorrectly recorded as live births in previous years or were not biological children of NLSY79 mothers. Six other child cases in the NLSY79 child database (but not the NLSY79 main file) were inadvertent duplicates and also removed.

The 13 cases were removed from the FERTILE records of the main NLSY79 database. (For data from the 1994 interview year only—these cases will still be present in earlier survey years' data on the NLSY79 main CD under the FERTILE record type.) When one of these cases was removed from the FERTILE record in the

NLSY79 main database, the remaining child cases were re-ordered according to birth order (for example, if the 2<sup>nd</sup> child listed was removed from the database, the 3<sup>rd</sup> child would become the 2<sup>nd</sup> child and so forth).

The 19 cases removed from the NLSY79 child database were deleted from every years' data, not just 1994. Users should note that none of the ID's of existing children were changed in the child database as a result of removing any of these cases.

Of the 19 cases removed from the child database, 7 were stillbirths, 6 were non-biological children, and 6 were duplicates. The following child cases were removed from the database and are, therefore, not included in the 1994 FERTILE records of the NLSY79 or in the Child data:

*Child IDs for non-biological children:* 184702, 184703, 454602, 588002, 626302, 1020303

*Child IDs for stillbirths:* 198501, 267203, 364806, 364807, 394502, 437903, 486903

*Child IDs for duplicates:* 370404, 536903, 804903, 833604, 902102, 929803

Questions regarding the removal of the incorrect child cases should be directed to Canada Keck. She can be reached by phone at (614) 442-7300 or by email at KECK@PEWTER.CHRR.OHIO-STATE.EDU

##### **Child data error**

The 1993 child data question G1278.19 (# ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS IN HOUSEHOLD OF MOTHER) is incorrectly incremented by one. To obtain the correct value, subtract 1 from all valid values.

##### **Young adult codebook variable description error**

In the 1994 young adult survey, variable YA940611 (reference number Y03701.00) has an incorrect codebook description. The question asks about the number of different persons the youth has dated in the past 12 months. If the respondent answers "haven't started to date yet," the answer was coded as "00" for the above variable. The codebook, however, states that the answer was coded as "95,"

which is not correct. The description in the codebook will be fixed on future data releases.

### Young adult field of study code

The field of study numerical code for question Q4-64 (reference number Y00476) contains a coding error. Sociology and political science/government were incorrectly given an identical numerical code. These code numbers will be separated in future data releases.

## Frequently Asked Questions

NLS User Services encourages NLS researchers to contact them with questions about, and problems they have encountered in accessing and using NLS data and/or documentation. Every effort is made to respond to user questions. Below are some questions asked by NLS users and the answers.

*Q1: Are income items in the NLSY79 validated, for example, by W-2 forms, employer confirmation of last reported wage, etc.?*

A1: NLSY79 income information is provided only by the respondent. Sometimes during the actual interview a respondent will consult paycheck stubs, checkbook registers, or tax records to give a more accurate response to an income question, but the interviewer does not examine these documents to validate the respondent's answer.

*Q2: What does the code "school shut down" mean for the reason for a gap of employment within a job?*

A2: This code is used for the "REASON FOR PERIOD NOT EMPLOYED" item found in the 1979 through 1994 survey years of the NLSY79. The respondents select this code to report that they are not at work because school was not in session, which can sometimes be the case with a teacher, a cafeteria worker, or a school bus driver.

*Q3: For three of the NLS original cohorts (older men, mature women, and young women), what does "EDT" mean in a title? Several variables from the same year seem*

*to have identical titles except for the "EDT" at the end of some of them.*

A3: EDT stands for "edited." Variables with EDT, ED, EDITED, or E added to the end of the title indicate some editing to the original variable has taken place. Most of the edited variables are from the CPS section of the questionnaire. This section was not initially edited. Later, when the U.S. Bureau of the Census started editing the section, both the response to the original questions and the edited question version were included in the data set released to the public.

Unless the research focuses on examining interviewer error, it would be best to use the edited variables. Differences between the edited and non-edited versions are usually quite minor.

## Completed NLS Research

Following is a listing of recent research based on data from the NLS cohorts. These entries supplement those found in the NLS Annotated Bibliography located at <http://www.chrr.ohio-state.edu/nls-bib/>

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Averett, Susan L; Peters, H. Elizabeth; and Waldman, Donald M. "Tax Credits, Labor Supply, and Child Care." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 79,1, pp. 125-135, February 1997. [NLSY79]

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## NLS Contact Information

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NLS User Services: Center for Human Resource Research  
The Ohio State University  
921 Chatham Lane, Suite 200  
Columbus, Ohio 43221-2418  
usersvc@pewter.chrr.ohio-state.edu  
(614) 442-7300  
(614) 442-7329 (Fax)

NLS Program Office: National Longitudinal Surveys  
2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Room 4945  
Washington, DC 20212-0001  
Attention: Julie Yates  
Yates\_J@bls.gov  
(202) 606-7388  
(202) 606-4602 (Fax)

NLS documentation,  
data, and data updates: mcclaskie@pewter.chrr.ohio-  
state.edu

NLS web site: <http://stats.bls.gov/nlshome.htm>

BLS-NLS publications: Jain\_Rita@bls.gov  
(202) 606-7405

NLS News Editors: Mary Joyce and Donna S. Rothstein  
Joyce\_M@bls.gov  
Rothstein\_D@bls.gov

NLS Program Director  
and Media Contact: Michael W. Horrigan  
Horrigan\_M@bls.gov  
(202) 606-7386