



U.S. Department of Labor  
Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Release of 1996 Children of the NLSY79 Survey Data

Data from the 1996 surveys of the Children of the NLSY79 will soon be available on CD-ROM. This disc contains information about the children and young adults of the NLSY79. It also contains data from the 1986-94 child and young adult interviews as well as cognitive and socioemotional assessments.

The 1996 survey collected information from 7,103 children and young adults, or 87 percent of the children born to NLSY79 mothers who were interviewed. Interviewers assessed 5,431 children ages 14 and younger and 1,672 young adults, ages 15 and older as of December 31, 1996. Whereas the sample continues to include children of all ages, 1996 was the first year that children ages 10 and older constituted the majority of those interviewed.

This article begins by defining the various child survey instruments and goes on to discuss the 1996 interview, highlighting changes from 1994. The article describes important changes in the child CD-ROM and concludes with information on how to obtain additional data and documentation items.

### Interview content

Five instruments are used during each child survey. For children ages 14 or younger, the interview involves a computer-administered child supplement, which asks mothers to provide information on the child's background and health and includes various child assessments. These mothers also complete a mother supplement that contains child behavior and development scales; additional information about the child's schooling and

family background is also collected. Children ages 10-14 answer a paper self-administered supplement, which asks questions about their attitudes and behaviors. The computer-assisted young adult survey is administered to children who will reach age 15 or older by the end of the interview year. Finally, these young adults complete the young adult self-report booklet, which elicits information about a variety of their attitudes and behaviors.

Information collected for the 1996 interview is very similar to that for 1994. The sections of the child supplement and young adult survey that gather data on the child's background and demographic characteristics are the same as in 1994. The health section is also essentially unchanged.

The child assessments are a central facet of the child and mother supplements. The following assessments remain unchanged from 1994:

- Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (mother, interviewer)
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (child)
- Peabody Individual Achievement Tests: Math and Reading Assessments (child)
- Behavior Problems Index (mother)
- Temperament Scales (mother)
- Motor and Social Development Scales (mother)

Changes to the child assessments include:

- The McCarthy Scale of Children's Abilities-Verbal Memory Subscale (dropped from the child supplement).
- The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for

Children-Revised (WISC-R): Digit Span Subscale (administered to children ages 7-14 in 1994, was given only to children ages 7-11 in 1996).

- The Self-Perception Profile for Children (previously completed by children ages 8-14, was administered to those ages 12-14 in 1996).

Data regarding the child's school experiences have been collected since the beginning of the child surveys. A new series of questions was added to the child supplement (for children ages 6-14) and the young adult survey. These questions asked children to estimate the amount of time they spend on homework each week, and to assess the extent of their parents' involvement in their education, and the teaching styles used in their English classes.

A similar series was included in the mother supplement. These questions, addressed to mothers of children ages 5-14, asked them to report the amount of time her child spent on homework and the extent of her involvement in her child's education. A new question in the 1996 series also asked mothers to state the total number of schools attended by her child.

The final component of the child data collection asks a large number of attitude and behavior questions of children ages 10-14 and of young adults. These questions, unchanged since 1994, solicit information from these children about topics such as substance use, criminal activity (young adults only), relationship with their parents, computer use, dating, and sexual activity (children ages 13 and older only). Young adults also completed several attitude scales: The Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Mastery Scale (Pearlin et al., 1981), and the Cen-

ter for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale (Radloff, 1977).

### Child CD-ROM

Although a large part of the interview content has remained the same since 1994, there is a significant difference in the organization of the CD-ROM. In previous years, the child disc included all data for females in the main NLSY79 survey. However, space constraints on the CD-ROM and the large amount of data generated by computer-assisted surveys have made it impossible to continue to include all of this information on the child disc. Therefore, the new CD-ROM contains only data from the child and young adult surveys and a set of constructed variables based on information from the NLSY79 mothers' longitudinal record. These maternal variables (attached to each child case) include information on maternal household composition, employment, pre- and postnatal care, family background, health, and childcare. Individuals interested in linking other mother information with child information can easily extract female data from the main NLSY79 CD-ROM and merge it with data from the child disc using the mother's identification number.

Researchers interested in purchasing these data should contact NLS User Services. (See the back page of this newsletter for contact information.) The child CD-ROM will be accompanied by a *Data Users Guide*, which provides information about the administration of the various survey instruments and assessments and helps to understand and interpret the data. Additional documentation items are also available from NLS User Services.

### References

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Radloff, Lenore Sawyer. "The CES-D Scale: A Self-Report Depression Scale for Research in the General Population." *Applied Psychological Measurement* 1,3, pp. 385-401, Summer 1977.

Rosenberg, Morris. *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Princeton University

Press: Princeton, 1965.

### Release of the NLS Mature Women's Pension Program

The NLS Mature Women's Pension Calculator, a personal computer program designed to assist users interested in retirement and pension issues, is now available. In 1989, the National Longitudinal Survey of Mature Women asked respondents about the most important pensions for themselves and their husbands. Using information gathered from the respondents, Census Bureau staff members were able to collect pension plan descriptions directly from the respondents' employers, who provide their pensions, and from files maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor. These pension descriptions contain formulas for calculating benefits for workers at different ages and with various years of employment with the firm. The descriptions also specify the requirements for collecting benefits under any particular pension formula. Staff members at the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, then coded this information into a standardized format to be used by the pension calculator program.

The pension calculator computes how much money mature women respondents will receive in benefits upon retiring. This program can produce several different types of information. First, it can generate an output file containing information on the amount of money the respondent will receive from each pension plan and from Social Security upon retirement. This file is available in three different formats and can be merged with information from the main mature women data file. Researchers can also vary the respondent's retirement age to see how yearly benefit amounts change.

Second, the pension file generates information that can be used on its own to run simulation exercises. For example, researchers can investigate issues, such as what happens to pension values and monthly payments when the inflation rate changes.

In both cases, the user provides a parameter file as input that contains key assumptions about the economy, such as the inflation rate and real wage growth. By

varying these key factors, users can simulate how a variety of macro-economic changes will affect a retiree's income.

This project was managed by Professor Tom Steinmeier and the software was produced by the University of Michigan. The pension program and documentation run on IBM PCs using DOS operating system. System requirements are relatively minimal. Users need an Intel 486DX or compatible CPU, about 13.25 megabytes of available system memory, and approximately 10 megabytes of free disk space. Interested users should contact NLS User Services to obtain the pension program and accompanying documentation.

### Data on Parents of the NLSY97

Parents' experiences and behavior can be important influences on their children's education and career choices. Round 1 of the NLSY97 collected information from parents about family background, parents' employment, finances, fertility, and marital histories.

The parent questionnaire is unique to the NLSY97 and was not administered in any of the other NLS surveys. The parent interview provides valuable information to researchers because it allows the survey to gather relatively accurate data about the youth's early childhood from the parent that would have been less accurately reported by the youth respondents themselves. It also permits researchers to examine the effect particular parental background characteristics, behaviors, and experiences may have on a youth's educational and labor market outcomes. Further, because there were similar questions on some topics in both the parent and youth portions of the interview, researchers can compare the opinions of the respondents to those of their parents. Such issues are parental rule-making and expectations about the youth's future.

This article focuses on questions about the respondent's parent(s) in round one of the survey. It also explains the administration of the parent questionnaire and describes the extensive resident parent data available. Data about non-resident or deceased parents are then also discussed. Finally, comparable information available for other NLS cohorts is examined.

**Figure 1. Resident parental hierarchy**

1.	Biological mother
2.	Biological father
3.	Adoptive mother
4.	Adoptive father
5.	Stepmother
6.	Stepfather
7.	Guardian, relative
8.	Foster parent, youth lived with for 2+ years
9.	Other non-relative, youth lived with for 2+ years
10.	Mother-figure, relative
11.	Father-figure, relative
12.	Mother-figure, non-relative, youth lived with for 2+ years
13.	Father-figure, non-relative, youth lived with for 2+ years

**Administration of the parent questionnaire**

The parent questionnaire, which is the main source of parent information for the NLSY97, collects extensive background information from one of the youth's resident parents. During the screening process, the exact relationships of the parents to the eligible youth were established (e.g., biological or adoptive). This information was used to select a parent to complete this questionnaire. Figure 1 presents the pre-ordered list used to choose the parent. The first person on the list was chosen first. In cases where that person was unavailable to complete the interview, the next resident parent on the list was asked to participate. If the youth did not live with a parent-type figure or lived with a guardian or a parental figure not listed (e.g., a foster parent with whom the youth has lived for less than 2 years), then no parent questionnaire was administered.

Table 1 lists the major sections of round 1 (1997) of the parent questionnaire

and provides a brief description of the questions asked within each major section. This article discusses those sections that relate to information about the parent and his or her spouse or partner. However, information on parental relationships is not included here, as it has been discussed in a previous issue (*NLS News* issue 98-95).

**Parental family background**

The family background section of the parent questionnaire asked questions regarding the responding parent's origin or descent and place of birth. This part of the survey also collected information about the parent's:

- Number of siblings
- Religion in which he or she was raised
- Year of birth and highest grade level completed by his or her parents

Additional questions were on whether this parent had lived with both biological parents while growing up and, if not, who

the parent did live with; the reason for not living with both parents; and the ages that he or she lived apart from one or both parents. Information was also gathered on the type of community where the responding parent lived at age 14.

The same information was elicited for the parent's current spouse or partner. An additional question determined the number of times the parent's current spouse or partner had been legally married.

**Parent's current situation: Beliefs, health, and finances**

Data were collected through the parent questionnaire about recent history and current life decisions about the parents and the parent's spouse or partner (except for those in the self-administered section reported below). These questions covered present employment status, marital status, and highest grade completed, as well as whether any language other than English is spoken at home.

The parents then reported their religious preference and how often they attended a worship service in the past year. In the self-administered section of the parent questionnaire, completed by parents of youths 14 and younger, another set of questions elicited more detail about the parent's religious beliefs and practices.

In the parent health section, the NLSY97 inquired about the responding parent's and his or her current spouse's or partner's health. Data were gathered on the parent's height and weight as well as the presence of any long-term health problem that limited the type or amount of employment possible. Questions on a variety of other medical conditions were also

**Table 1. Content of the parent questionnaire**

Section	Description of Data Collected
Information	Verification of own and youth's data collected in the <i> Screener, Household Roster, and Non-resident Roster Questionnaire</i> .
Family background	Parents' family background (e.g., birthplace, siblings).
Calendars	Dates of significant events in parent's life (e.g., marital history, employment history).
Parent health	Information about the general state of the parents' health (e.g., long-term problems).
Income and assets	1996 earnings of all household members and other parental income and assets.
Self-administered	Questions about own self-esteem, religion, health, behavior/beliefs, and spouse or partner relations.
Child calendar	Places lived, school history, paternity, adoption or custody, poverty, and child care for each eligible youth in the household.
Child health	Data about the health and health insurance of each eligible youth.
Child income	1996 financial support and earnings of each eligible youth.
Expectations	Predictions by parent about each eligible youth's life in the next year and at age 20 and 30.
Family	Questions about the youth's social skills, decision-making, positive behavior, and relations with parents.

collected. If the NLSY97 youth was not currently living with his or her biological parents but had been in contact with them since age 10, the responding parent was asked about the height and weight of those parents as well.

In the self-administered section of the parent questionnaire, parents of youths born in 1982, 1983, and 1984 reported attitudes related to their health status. First, they expressed their level of agreement with a series of statements about their attitude toward themselves (e.g., I'm always optimistic about my future, I hardly ever expect things to go my way). Parents of youths born in 1983 also reported their beliefs about the possible effects of alcohol (similar questions were asked of youths born in 1983 in the youth questionnaire).

Household financial data were gathered in the income and assets section of the parent questionnaire. Responding parents provided information about their income, the income of their spouse or partner, and the income of each household occupant age 14 or older. For the 1996 calendar year, information was gathered on the parent's earnings from a job (including military service), farm, business, or professional practice; similar data were collected for his or her current spouse or partner. The parent also reported any other income received during 1996, including income from interest or dividends and child support. Finally, data on amounts received from various government programs in 1996 were collected.

For a more comprehensive picture of the family's financial situation, the parent was also asked about assets (e.g., family owns or rents their dwelling, the value of any real estate or business partnership) and debts (e.g., amount owed on vehicles, educational loans, credit card debt).

#### Parent retrospective data

The "calendars" section of the parent questionnaire recorded retrospective event dates for parental employment and marriage histories, as well as a history of participation in government programs for low-income households.

In this section, the NLSY97 first collected a history of the responding parent's spells of employment since the parent's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or the date of birth of the old-

est NLSY97 youth in the household, whichever was earlier. Information gathered for each spell included beginning and ending dates and the usual number of hours worked per week.

Employment information is also available about each spouse of the parent who lived with the oldest NLSY97 youth in the household at some time during his or her marriage to the responding parent. If the spouse was working at some point during the marriage, the survey recorded information on the spouse's spells of employment and the average number of hours per week worked during each spell.

The parent's marital history was explored through questions on the beginning and ending dates of each marriage, any changes in marital status during each marriage (e.g., legal separation), and how each marriage ended (e.g., divorce or death). The participation history of a responding parent in government programs for low-income households involved a series of questions that recorded the number of years the parent participated in various government programs (e.g., AFDC or ADC, SSI, WIC) during the past 5 years.

#### Non-resident parents

Information concerning non-resident parents was gathered in the non-resident roster section of the screener, household roster, and non-resident roster questionnaire. This instrument determined the relationship and status of the youth's non-resident relatives, including biological, adoptive, or stepparents. It also collected demographic information (race, ethnicity, marital status, education level, and 1996 employment status) for the non-resident parents.

Other information gathered about a non-resident biological parent included the number of miles the youth lives from that parent, the number of people living in that parent's household, and the relationship of each member of that household to the youth. Finally, if one of the youth's biological parents was reported as being deceased, additional information was gathered on his or her year of death and age at death.

If the youth respondent has had contact with a non-resident parent since the age of 10, the parent questionnaire col-

lected additional information about that parent. The responding parent provided information about the absent parent's early life experiences. This group of questions asked about the parent's living situations and environment during childhood.

#### Parent data after round 1

For round 2 of the NLSY97, which is fielding in late 1998 and early 1999, a parent questionnaire is not being administered. Instead, the round 2 youth questionnaire updates some of the data previously collected in the round 1 parent questionnaire. In addition, in round 2, resident parents of youth under age 18 complete a single-page paper supplement called the household income update. This self-administered form captures receipt and amount, if any, of the parent's and parent's current spouse/partner's wage and salary income, as well as any other income received by parent and spouse/partner in 1997. In addition, the youth questionnaire asks for the 1997 earnings of each parent.

#### Comparison to other NLS surveys

Surveys for each NLS cohort include questions about the respondents' parents. If the respondent and parents share a household, the weeks worked and occupation of these parents are usually found in the general information collected about household members age 14 and older. In addition, various years of the NLSY79 have collected data on the parents' birthplace, educational attainment, occupation, age, and life status. NLSY79 respondents ages 40 and older in 1998 also reported their parents' health status, cause of death, and age at death. For the NLSY79 children, basic demographic data are available for the fathers; because the mothers are NLSY79 respondents, their information from the main survey is quite detailed.

Data gathered from original cohort respondents provide the country of birth and life status of their parents, as well as the educational attainment and occupation of their parents during the respondents' teenage years. In recent surveys, questions have asked the mature and young women about their parents' health and income and about transfers of time and money to and from their parents. For specific years and questions, see the *NLS Handbook* or the

appropriate user's guide for each cohort.

### Spotlight: NLSY79 Child Health Data

Researchers have become increasingly interested in topics related to children's health such as how a child's health affects his or her development and the impact that family health history and behaviors has on child health. The National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) began providing funds in the early 1980s to collect fertility and prenatal care information from NLSY79 mothers because of the importance of this research area. In 1986, data collection was further expanded through NICHD-sponsored supplemental surveys and assessments, which gather information about the children of women in the NLSY79 cohort on a biennial basis.

The NLSY79 child surveys, coupled with data on both the mothers and children drawn from the main youth interviews, provide researchers with a wealth of data to use in analysis of factors affecting child health. Extensive questions on

prenatal and postnatal care allow investigation of maternal behaviors in connection with child health conditions. The young adult children of the NLSY79 (those age 15 and older) who have their own children answer prenatal and postnatal questions similar to those asked of their mothers, permitting cross-generational analysis of acquired health attitudes and behaviors. Finally, because the main NLSY79 health collection has recently been expanded for respondents age 40 and over, researchers can also compare the health of the mothers with their children as each gets older.

#### Prenatal care

The main NLSY79 survey asks detailed questions about the prenatal medical care and health behaviors of mothers in the sample. Most of these questions have been kept the same over time, allowing for easy comparison between pregnancies in different years and between different respondents. Table 1 shows the years in which prenatal and postnatal care questions have been asked and the children referred to in each interview year.

In each survey, the respondent states

whether she received prenatal care at any time during her pregnancy; she then reports the month in which she began receiving care. Through 1990, the respondent was also asked whether she underwent an ultrasound or amniocentesis during the pregnancy. If so, the survey collected information about the timing of the procedure, the reason it was done, and the results. Finally, respondents report whether they have undergone an abortion since the date of the last interview.

Respondents have also answered questions about health behaviors during pregnancy in the prenatal care series. Since 1983, these surveys have asked whether the respondent smoked or drank alcohol and the frequency of those activities. In 1988, marijuana and cocaine uses were added to this series. Mothers were then asked whether they took vitamins, reduced their salt or caloric intake, used diuretics, reduced or stopped smoking, and reduced or stopped alcohol use during pregnancy. For each behavior exhibited, respondents stated whether they took that action on the advice of a medical professional. NLSY79 women are also asked about weight gain or loss during pregnancy, an

**Table 1. Reference children for prenatal and postnatal care questions**

Survey Year	Prenatal care	Postnatal care	Infant feeding <sup>1</sup>	Immunizations
83	youngest child	youngest child	up to 8 children	youngest child
84	all born since last int.	all born since last int.	all born since last int.; all missing information	all born since last int.
85	all born since last int.	all born since last int.	all born since last int.; all missing information	all born since last int.; all missing information
86	all born since last int.; all born before 1983 and not youngest child in 1983	all born since last int.; all born before 1983 and not youngest child in 1983	all born since last int.; all missing information	all born since last int.; all missing information
88, 90	all born since last child int.	all born since last child int.	all born since last int.; all missing information	all born since last int.; all missing information
92, 94, 96, 98 main	all born since last child int.	all born since last child int.	all born since last int.; all missing information	—
94 young adult	all children	all children	all children	—
96, 98 young adult	all born since last child int.	all born since last child int.	all born since last int.	—

<sup>1</sup> For the main youth cohort, comprehensive infant feeding through 1990; breast-feeding only since 1998.

important indicator of infant health. Finally, in 1988 and 1990, respondents reported on the extent of physical activity at home and on the job during pregnancy.

**Young adult survey.** Researchers can also compare the prenatal health care of NLSY79 mothers with the care and behaviors of their young adult children who have had children. In each young adult survey since 1994, respondents who have been pregnant are asked the same questions as their mothers regarding prenatal care. These questions, described in detail above, include whether the respondent received any care, the extent of substance use during pregnancy, behavioral change (such as taking vitamins), and weight gain or loss. As of 1996, 124 female young adults reported having had one or more biological child; a total of 185 children have been born to female members of this sample.

#### **Birth and postnatal care**

The birth experiences and care of infants during the first year of life have an important future impact on a child's outcomes. This section describes infant care and feeding questions in the NLSY79 surveys. For the birth and postnatal care questions, the years in which questions have been asked and the children referred to are shown in table 1 above.

**Birth.** Respondents answer several questions about the birth of each child. The survey first records whether the child was born within a week of the due date; if not, the respondent reports the number of weeks early or late the child was born. Respondents are also asked whether each child was born by cesarean section. The length of the child's hospital stay after birth is also recorded. If the mother stayed in the hospital for a different length of time than her child, the difference is also recorded.

Finally, the mother provides the length and weight of each child at birth. If she is unsure of the child's weight, she is asked whether the child weighed more or less than 5½ pounds, a common standard for low birth weight. Users should note that the birth weight questions were asked as part of the infant feeding practices series through 1990, so the reference chil-

dren for these years are the same as those listed for the feeding questions described later in this section.

**Postnatal care.** The interviews also gather information about illnesses and injuries experienced by the child during its first year. In 1983, the survey asked whether the child had to stay in the hospital overnight; if so, it also asked the reason for the stay. In each subsequent survey, this section has expanded to record additional data. Mothers first state whether the child was taken to a health care professional during the first year of life for an illness or injury. If so, the interview asks:

- The nature of the illness or injury
- Symptoms of the illness or injury
- The age of the child (in months) when first and last taken for care
- The number of health care visits related to the illness or injury
- The type of health care facility the child was taken to
- If the child was taken to a hospital, whether surgery was necessary

If there was a second injury or illness during the child's first year, the same information is recorded for that episode.

The interview also gathers data about well-baby care during the first year of life. If the child was ever taken to a doctor for well-baby care, the instrument records the month the child was taken and, beginning in 1984, the type of health care facility to which the child was taken. Users should note that this information may not be complete if the child was not yet 1 year old as of the interview date. In these cases, no effort is made to update the data through the child's first birthday in a subsequent interview.

In 1983-86, mothers reported the months in which children received DPT and polio vaccinations, as well as measles vaccinations. In 1988 and 1990, only the DPT and polio information was collected. The immunization questions are an exception to the universe information at the beginning of this article; for these questions, each interview collected data on any of the respondent's children missing information, not just those born since the last interview.

**Infant feeding.** Mothers also provide information about infant feeding practices. As with the immunization questions, this series is administered for all children missing data, not just those born since the last interview. The survey first asks whether the child was ever breast-fed and, if so, the age when regular breast-feeding was discontinued.

From 1983 to 1990, the feeding series also included questions on the age the child was first fed cow's milk and solid food, as well as the ages the child started and stopped receiving formula. Finally, in 1985-1990, the mother reported on how the child was fed at birth (i.e., intravenously, evaporated milk, or other) if the child was not fed breast milk, formula, or cow's milk.

**Young adult survey.** Young adults with their own children respond to the same postnatal care questions in the young adult survey as the ones their mothers answered in the main NLSY79 interview. These questions record birth information, injuries and illnesses during the first year of life, well-baby care during the first year, and infant feeding practices.

Users should note that the young adult feeding questions are slightly more detailed than those currently asked of the main NLSY79 women. Young adults are asked about the age when they began feeding the child cow's milk and solid food, as well as other methods of feeding the child at birth; these questions were discontinued for the main NLSY79 after the 1990 survey. In addition, young adults who feed their children formula provide the reason for this choice; their mothers were never asked this question during the main NLSY79 interview.

#### **Childhood health history**

The collection of information about child health has continued during childhood and teenage years, allowing researchers to track changes in health. Most of this information is gathered in the child supplement, which is administered to the mother during the child interviews. Since 1986, these surveys have occurred in the even years. Beginning in 1994, children ages 15 and older, the young adults, answer questions about their own health in the young adult sur-

vey. A few questions about the children and young adults continue to be asked during the main NLSY79 interview. The childhood health questions usually cover general health status; accidents, injuries, and illnesses over the past year; and health insurance information.

**General health status.** A primary focus of the child health collection is on general well-being and health status. The Motor and Social Development Scale (NCHS, 1984), an important indicator of health and child development, was administered to mothers with children under 4 years old in each survey. This scale measures developmental milestones in motor, cognitive, communication, and social development. Additionally, the child's weight and height are recorded in each interview; this information is also self-reported during the young adult survey. For girls ages 8 and over, the mother states whether the child has started having menstrual periods and the age she began. Female young adult respondents answer this question if the data are missing when the young adult interview was administered.

Respondents also provide information about regular health checkups. In each child supplement survey through 1996, mothers reported how long it has been since the child's last health checkup; this information was also collected in the main youth interview in 1998. The child supplement also asks mothers with children ages 2 and older when the child's last dental checkup or dental work took place. If the child is age 15 or older, routine health checkup information is gathered in the main NLSY79 interview for young adults living at home and in the young adult survey for those living away from the mother's home.

In every child supplement, mothers report whether their children experience a physical, emotional, or mental health condition that limits school attendance, schoolwork, or play. The first two activities are asked only for children ages 4 and older. The survey also asks whether the child has any health condition, which requires regular medical attention, medicine, or special equipment such as a wheelchair. If any of these conditions exist, the mother provides information about the type of limitation and, beginning in

1990, the duration of that limitation.

In the young adult survey, respondents answer similar questions regarding any health condition that limits the type of work they can do for pay, school attendance, or schoolwork. In addition, young adults state their opinion of their overall level of health.

Mental and behavioral health is an important facet of a child's overall well-being. To address this component of health, mothers state whether the child has seen a mental health professional for a mental problem in the last year (ages 3 and older), whether they feel the child may need help for a mental problem, and whether the child takes any medication to control his or her behavior. Young adults respond to the same series of questions in the young adult self-report booklet.

The general mental health of children ages 10-14 is investigated through the administration of a 9-item question series that asks how frequently the child experiences a number of different moods. Similarly, the young adult survey includes the Mastery Scale (Pearlin et al., 1981), the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), and the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale (Radloff, 1977).

**Accidents, injuries, and illnesses.** Both the child supplement and the young adult survey collect data on accidents and injuries suffered by the child. In 1986, the child supplement asked how many accidents or injuries required medical attention in the past year. In each survey since 1988, the mother has described the cause and result of up to three accidents or injuries in the past year, as well as where each incident occurred. Beginning in 1994, young adults provide this same information in the young adult survey. Next, the mother or young adult states the cause and result of up to three accidents or injuries requiring hospitalization since the last interview and reports where the accident or injury occurred.

The survey also records information about the child's illnesses in the last year. In each child supplement, the mother reports on the number of illnesses in the last year that required medical attention. Mothers also provided this information during the main youth interview for young adults still living at home in 1994, 1996,

and 1998. The young adult survey collected the number of illnesses in the past year from young adults living away from home.

**Health insurance.** Data on the child's health insurance coverage have been collected in a number of survey years. In the 1989 and 1993-1998 main NLSY79 surveys, the mother reported the provider of health insurance for all her children as a group. The 1994 survey also asked respondents to state the number of months in 1993 when their children lacked coverage. Further, if children were not covered at the time of the 1994 survey, information was also gathered regarding their last period of health insurance coverage.

Additionally, each child supplement asks the mother to report whether the child is covered by a private health plan or Medicaid. This information is collected in the main NLSY79 survey from mothers of young adults living at home and in the young adult survey from those living elsewhere.

#### Mother's health

NLSY79 survey questions allow researchers to compare the health of the children to that of their mothers. In most NLSY79 survey years, health questions have focused on the types and duration of health conditions that affect the respondent's job activity. However, recent surveys have added more questions about the general health of the respondents, increasing the possibilities for comparison.

Questions about health conditions that limit the type or amount of work the NLSY79 respondent can do have been included in every NLSY79 survey. If the respondent reports such a condition, she is also asked to report the duration of the condition. These questions were described in detail in issue 87 of the *NLS News*.

Recognizing that health issues affect more than job performance, investigators have added additional questions to the NLSY79 health section over the years. NLSY79 respondents have been asked to report their height and weight in a number of survey years. Height was recorded in the 1981, 1982, 1983 (females only), and 1985 surveys. Since weight fluctuates more than height, it has been col-

lected in 11 surveys between 1981 and 1998.

The respondent's mental health has also been addressed in several surveys. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was part of the 1987 questionnaire, and the Pearlin Mastery Scale was administered in 1992. The 1992 survey also included the full 20-item CES-D depression scale; the 1994 interview contained a reduced seven-item version of this scale. The inclusion of these scales allows comparison of the mother's results with those of her young adult children.

The 1998 survey included a new series of questions assessing the respondents' level of physical activity in their daily lives. Respondents reported the extent of their physical activity on the job and the frequency of their participation in light physical activity (walking, dancing, gardening, bowling), vigorous physical exercise (aerobics, running, swimming, bicycling), and heavy housework (scrubbing floors, washing windows).

Beginning with the 1998 survey, respondents age 40 or older answered a detailed health profile. This profile is planned for administration in future years to respondents who have turned 40 since the last interview. This new health section includes the 7-item CES-D scale, questions about regular health checkups, and a detailed list of health problems experienced by the respondent.

The 40-and-older health module also administers the Medical Outcomes Trust's SF-12 Health Survey, designed by John Ware of the New England Medical Center Hospital. This 12-question inventory provides a measure of the respondents' physical and mental health by focusing on the ways in which health affected their usual activities in the past four weeks. To provide more information about family health history, respondents report the life status, health, and cause of and age at death of their biological parents. As the cohort members age, more health information will be available to researchers from this detailed series of questions.

Finally, respondents have also provided information about health insurance in a number of surveys. If a respondent's employer provides insurance, the benefits questions in the employer supplements have recorded that information each year

except 1981. Additionally, the 1989 interview and subsequent even-year surveys have asked all respondents, regardless of employment status, whether they and their spouse or partner are covered by health insurance. If so, respondents reported the source of their coverage.

The 1994 survey included an expanded set of health insurance questions regarding periods of noncoverage. These questions, described above in the childhood health section, were also asked of the respondent and the spouse or partner. The insurance questions were repeated in the 1996 survey for respondents only.

#### For more information

Researchers have used NLS child and mother health data in a number of articles. Interested readers can peruse references and abstracts on the NLS on-line bibliography at [www.chrr.ohio-state.edu/nls-bib/](http://www.chrr.ohio-state.edu/nls-bib/) by choosing search terms such as "child health," "children, health care," "children, well-being," or "mothers, health" from the descriptor list. Researchers can also consult a non-annotated bibliography of child health research, "Maternal and Child Health: Pre/Postnatal Care," available from NLS User Services.

Readers who are planning to use the child health data to perform their own research, or want to learn more about child health information, should obtain two publications available from NLS User Services. The *NLSY Child Handbook* (1993) describes the health data through the 1990 interview and discusses data quality. Additionally, "Maternal-Child Health Data from the NLSY: 1988 Tabulations and Summary Discussion" looks at data from a single year and suggests avenues for further research.

Users can also explore this topic by searching the main NLSY79 and child CD-ROMs for words like "health," "illness," or "insurance." On the main NLSY79 file, most child health questions are contained in the yearly BIRTHRXX record type or the BIRTHREC record type for 1982-84. Health questions on the child CD-ROM can also be found in the NATAL, MOMWELL, MOMSUPXX, and CHDSUPXX record types. Finally, readers can peruse the questionnaires for various survey years to determine the exact

questions available.

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#### CD-ROM Extraction Software Notice

Many researchers have received a "runtime error 200" while using the CHRRDBA search and extraction software provided on the NLS CD-ROMs. This problem occurs on computers with 200 MHz and faster processors. An upgraded version of the CHRRDBA software that corrects this problem is available. Users can download this upgraded software by accessing CHRR's ftp site: [ftp.chrr.ohio-state.edu/chrrdba/chrr714.zip](ftp://chrr.ohio-state.edu/chrrdba/chrr714.zip). Users should log on as "Anonymous" and use "Guest" as the password.

#### Error Notice: Missing Variable in Mature and Young Women's Data Files

Current marital status for all respondents who were interviewed in 1995 was not included in the 1995 data files for either the mature or young women. While

this variable can be created by using marital status from the last interview and updating it with any changes reported in the household section, a created marital status variable is now available for each cohort from NLS User Services (see back for contact information). These variables will be added to their respective data files with the next CD-ROM data release.

## Frequently Asked Questions

NLS User Services encourages researchers to contact them with questions and problems they have encountered while accessing and using NLS data and/or documentation. Every effort is made to answer these questions. Below are some recent questions asked by NLS users along with the answers. These questions refer to the NLSY79 cohort.

*Q1: I cannot locate "Year Began 1<sup>st</sup> Marriage" created variables for 1993. Are these variables available?*

A1: No. The "Year Began 1<sup>st</sup> Marriage" variables are located in the FERTILE record type; variables are not available for 1993 in this record type. These variables were created every year through 1992 but are subsequently only constructed in child interview years. The relevant 1993 information is instead included in the 1994 data.

*Q2: Is the "Total Income of Partner from Wages or Salary" for the previous calendar year available for survey year 1994?*

A2: Yes. Beginning with the 1994 survey, data for spouses and opposite-sex partners are collected in the same question and released in the same variable. To find income for partners only, you simply need to combine the spouse/partner income variable (R49960.) with the household record variables identifying the relationship of the respondent to the spouse or partner (e.g., R50709.).

*Q3: The created hourly wage variables have a very large number of valid skips (-4 codes), and it appears that most of these respondents are employed. Is there a reason why fewer respondents than expected*

*have valid data for these variables?*

A3: If any value required for the creation of hourly wage, including pay rate, time unit of pay rate, and hours per week usually worked, is missing, then the value for the created hourly wage is set to -4. Additionally, hourly rate of pay cannot be created for respondents who report a time unit of "other." Since a number of respondents are missing at least one piece of information or report an "other" time unit, the number for whom an hourly wage variable can be created is noticeably lower than the number who are employed. The number of -4 values for the created hourly wage values has been fairly consistent across survey years.

*Q4: How is the NLSY79 total net family income variable defined? Does the "net" mean that taxes are subtracted from income?*

A4: The total net family income variable is created by summing income from each source, including public assistance, as described in appendix 2 of the *Codebook Supplement* and the income section of the *NLSY79 User's Guide*. "Total net family income" is based on questions that explicitly specify "before taxes or other deductions..." in their text. Some inputs do not explicitly specify before or after taxes (e.g., child support, VEAP, educational benefits, income from inheritance, estate, or trust, etc.), and a few specify "after expenses" (e.g., business or farm income). Respondent-reported numbers are used without further editing. Appendix 2 of the *Codebook Supplement* contains the programs used to create this variable, including reference numbers for each question. Users can look up the question text for each reference number to clarify the exact text in the various input questions.

## Completed NLS Research

The following is a listing of recent research based on data from the various NLS cohorts that has not appeared in its current form in a previous issue of the *NLS News*. For a comprehensive listing, see the NLS Annotated Bibliography, located online at <http://www.chrr.ohio->

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### Are You Working With NLS Data?

If you are, we are interested in your work!

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- Are you working on a paper that uses NLS data?
- Have you published a recent paper using NLS data?

If you have received funding on a project, are working on a paper, or published a recent paper that uses NLS data, please contact: NLS User Services, Center for Human Resource Research, 921 Chatham Lane, Suite 200, Columbus, OH 43221; (614) 442-7300; e-mail: [usersvc@postoffice.chrr.ohio-state.edu](mailto:usersvc@postoffice.chrr.ohio-state.edu)

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