

TASK 1.2 EMPLOYMENT AND WORK ARRANGEMENTS CONTENT PANEL REPORT DRAFT

Overview

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Introduction

The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) are a significant, long-running program of the United States (U.S.) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), designed to support research into how Americans navigate changes in the economy and transition through various life course stages. As the youngest NLS cohort members are now entering their 40s, the BLS seeks to begin a new cohort of adolescents, targeted for fielding in 2026. This NLSY26 cohort will enable researchers to understand new trends in labor market experiences, education, and other factors that are affecting this new generation.

BLS contracted with NORC at the University of Chicago and CHRR at The Ohio State University to organize NLSY26 Content Panels to provide BLS with topical content and methodological inputs that a future design team can use to create an NLSY26 survey responsive to key research goals. As part of this NLSY26 Content Panels effort, NORC convened a content panel on employment, comprised of Federal and non-federal subject matter experts, to provide BLS with high-level recommendations that highlight emerging research themes, social trends, and policy changes relevant to consider for future data collection; methodological issues that may impact data collection for the NLSY26; and alternative data sources that might supplement a new survey. The content panel met multiple times between November 2022 and April 2023, to discuss recommendations on content and tradeoffs in survey design that BLS might consider for the new cohort.

Our goal is to advise BLS on employment content that might merit a different approach in the NLSY26 compared to prior cohorts. To do this the panel worked to proactively identify aspects of employment that have become increasingly or decreasingly important in the American economy, in scholarship, and in policy debates in recent years. We also deliberated and made recommendations on topics that BLS identified as of particular interest. We assessed the degree to which potential topics would complement the NLSY's longitudinal structure, following a youth and adolescent cohort forward for many years, given the existence of other information sources. After one full-panel introductory meeting, we began working in three subpanels focused on Job Characteristics, chaired by Sojourner; on Early Experiences at Work, chaired by Muller; and on Defining Work Arrangements, chaired by Houseman. Each subpanel met four times, and members did research and writing between meetings. In a final, whole-panel meeting, we discussed prioritization of recommendations overall.

The topical recommendations of the subpanels are captured in two separate reports, one for the Defining Work Arrangements subpanel and one for the Job Characteristics and Early Experiences at Work subpanels. These separate reports investigate a variety of topics which the panelists recommend for inclusion in the NLSY26, providing an overview of the research and policy landscape, describing specific questions or sets of questions which could be asked, and discussing potential alternative data sources and methodological issues. In the remainder of this overview report, we focus on synthesizing the work of all three panels. Section 2 provides some brief, cross-cutting notes about topics discussed in more detail in the individual panel reports. Section 3 presents a key recommendation regarding linkages to administrative data which cuts across all three subpanels. Finally, Section 4 concludes with a prioritization of the panel's recommendations (including the methodology used to arrive at that prioritization), and a description of the tradeoffs considered for this prioritization.

Issues relevant to all subpanels

The key goal of the panel was to identify particular topics for data collection. Exhibit 1, which is provided in a separate attachment, summarizes the recommended topics and provides additional detail, including whether the topic is included in past NLSY cohorts, recommendations for data collection method and frequency, and the panel's prioritization of the topic.

One topic we were asked to investigate by the BLS is areas of disparity and inequity that may be illuminated by the recommended survey topics. Here we note that disparities by race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, educational attainment, age, disability status, geography of residence and work location to as fine resolution as possible (in declining order of census block, tract, PUMA, county, state, region), occupation, and industry will all be of great interest across employment-related topics. Where appropriate, the individual topical sections of the subpanel reports call attention to other, topic-specific factors.

Both subpanel reports include numerous references to other surveys which may be useful sources for survey questions on the various topics. For easy reference, Exhibit 2 below summarizes all non-NLSY surveys mentioned in the subpanel reports. Please refer to the subpanel reports for more details about which questions are recommended and the strength of the committee's recommendations.

Exhibit 2. Potential sources for survey questions mentioned in the report (excluding existing NLS cohorts)

Survey topic area	Potential source	Examples of specific question topics
Early Work Experience	High School and Beyond 2022	Student employment, school programs and services
Volunteering	American Time Use Survey, CPS Volunteering Supplement	Whether volunteered and which activities
Work Schedule	Original survey (Ananat et al., 2021), the Shift Project (Harknett et al., 2022)	Work start and end times
Leaves from Work	Department of Labor FMLA reports (Vohra-Gupta et al., 2021)	Unmet need for leave
Discrimination and Fairness	Everyday Discrimination Questionnaire, Youth Development Survey, General Social Survey (GSS)	Perceptions of discrimination
	GSS, American Working Conditions Survey, NIOSH WellBQ	Respectful, fair, and supportive treatment from supervisors, coworkers, customers, and vendors
Restrictive Covenants	2014 Noncompete Survey (Starr et al., 2021; Prescott et al., 2016)	Understanding of noncompete agreements
Technology and Tasks	2017 Pew Survey, BLS Monthly Layoff Statistics establishment data 1995-2013	Whether worker lost job because they were replaced by a machine or computer
	ACT WorkKeys Applied Technology subtest	Technology used in blue-collar/industrial domains
Employer Monitoring and Surveillance	Harvard SHIFT Project (items under development)	Worker perception of employer monitoring
Work Location	Remote Life Survey (Brynjolfsson et al., 2022)	Frequency of working from home

Survey topic area	Potential source	Examples of specific question topics
Occupational Safety and Health	NIOSH surveys including Quality of Work Life Survey, 2015 Occupational Health Supplement to National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), and REGARDS study on stroke risk	Frequency of work stress, work demands, hostile work environment, work-life interference, stress management availability
	NIOSH Quality of Work Life Supplement in GSS, NIOSH WellBQ, NIOSH Occupational Health Supplements to NHIS	Exposure to ergonomic risks at work
	2010 NHIS	Exposure to vapors, gases, dusts, and fumes
Job Search	NY Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Expectations, Survey of Unemployed Workers in New Jersey, British Labor Force Survey	Job search while employed, expectations of job search success
Training and Development	PSID (1993)	Training needed for respondent's job
Voice at Work	Health and Retirement Survey (HRS), GSS, American Working Conditions Survey, NIOSH WellBQ	Worker control
Fringe Benefits	National Compensation Survey	Types of benefits offered
Defining Work Arrangements	Panel Study of Income Dynamics	Using open-ended questions and machine learning to classify workers into work arrangement categories
DWA – Self Employed	CPS, Contingent Worker Supplement, HRS, Gallup survey (Abraham et al., 2023)	Whether business is incorporated, whether they have employees, whether they are independent contractors
	Survey of Informal Work Participation, Enterprising and Informal Work Activities, Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking	Which informal jobs have you had, why did you engage in informal work, how much time in informal work, informal pay relative to formal work pay
	Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking	Platform work
DWA – contract work	Original survey (Osterman, 2023)	Contract company employment

Enabling Administrative Data Linkages

This section describes how to use external data sources in conjunction with or in place of NLSY26 survey data. Here we discuss our strong, overarching recommendation regarding the collection of identifying information for respondents' employers, which applies across all subpanels. Additional opportunities for data linkages on specific topics are discussed in the separate subpanel reports.

Key Recommendation

The panel was unanimous in recommending that the single most important action BLS could take here is to collect identifying information on respondents' employers in order to preserve the option to

link to alternative data sources such as administrative and commercial data. Even if it's not yet clear what the specific linkage strategy is, collecting identifying information unlocks a huge number of possibilities and preserves unknown future options, while failing to collect it forecloses many options. Promoting the possibility of linking survey data with administrative data would advance the objectives of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.

The most valuable administrative data linkages will be to employer characteristics in datasets contained in administrative employer censuses (e.g., Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages filings, Longitudinal Business Database, Linked Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) EEO-1, Internal Revenue Services (IRS) Form 5500 Annual Report of Employee Benefit Plan, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Form 300) and Federal enforcement datasets that represent a census of investigations and cited violations (e.g., OSHA, Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division, National Labor Relations Board, EEOC). Such sources could provide valuable context to understand the characteristics of an NLSY respondent's particular employer such as its size, age, growth patterns, staff turnover rates by worker type and location, firm tenure-wage profiles, racial composition, injury and illness risks, labor rights violations such as harassment and discrimination claims, retirement, and health plan characteristics. Some of these would be available at the firm, time, location, and job type level. Through linkage, such variables could be created and attached to the NLSY data.

Additional linkages could be made between particular employers and data on Federal program participation, such as use of Small Business Administration loans and technical assistance, U.S. Department of Labor-funded training or apprenticeship programs, sponsoring of H-1B visas for immigrant workers, and investments through the Department of Commerce via the CHIPS and Science Act. These variables could be attached via the employer record, which would give researchers a chance to leverage the NLSY to better understand many Federal programs' impacts on Americans' careers and productivity.

Variables capturing the average characteristics of employers of the same type could also be calculated from the administrative data and attached to the record. This would give researchers meaningful context for interpreting the value of the NLSY respondent's particular employer. For instance, if this employer has 100 employees, 4 sexual harassment complaints at the EEOC in the last 3 years, and firms in the same state, industry, size group, and year average 0.1 complaint, that is useful context. Average characteristics by type might be available from other public sources but having them defined in the same way as the NLSY employer's specific value would be valuable.

While access to restricted-use geographic identifiers for NLSY respondents will enable researchers to link to characteristics of those geographies, including variables on local community characteristics in more public NLSY databases via linkage through fine geography to outside sources can add value without increasing user burden, given appropriate data privacy safeguards. A valuable example would be to attach a measure of employer competitiveness for the respondent's local labor market based on their residence and perhaps one attached to each job based on employer location and job industry and/or occupation (Schubert et al., 2020; Handwerker and Dey, 2022; Qiu and Sojourner, 2022).

Employer identity can also be linked to private sector databases that attempt to build employer censuses. For instance, Lightcast (formerly Burning Glass) has widely used data on job openings. Job opening records include employer identity, location, job title, text describing attributes of the position, desired

candidate, and the employer. Researchers often link this source to others using employer identity. This has become a workhorse source of information on labor demand, compensation, skill and task content of jobs and their changes over time (Hershbein and Kahn, 2018; Deming and Kahn, 2019; Azar et al., 2020). Compensation information by employer, location, and job title can come from many sources, including Glassdoor, Payscale, and Greenwich.HR (Bana, 2022). Indeed and Glassdoor have compensation data on job openings, jobseeker application rates to particular openings, employees' Likert scale ratings of satisfaction, and textual reviews of the pros and cons of working for particular employers in particular places and positions. Novel measures of job characteristics can be constructed using these reviews (Sockin and Sojourner, 2022; Sockin, 2022; Sockin, Sojourner, and Starr, 2022; Ward, 2022).

Linking to representative employer samples (e.g., National Compensation Survey, Current Employment Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics) could have some value, but any particular employer has a low chance of being in a representative sample. Representative samples could be useful for defining average characteristics of employers by type (e.g., industry, location, size, or ownership structure) and these can be linked to particular NLSY employers who share that type. While some such summary statistics are already available, others are not.

Aside from employers, collecting identifying information on individual respondents to facilitate linkage into administrative datasets is also obviously valuable but is easier to collect at later points, since the BLS tracks cohort members closely but not all their employers. For respondents, linking to their unemployment insurance records via LEHD, Social Security earnings files, or IRS W-2s and 1099s to get verified job earnings would increase the quality of the survey data. Having independent measures of the same concepts opens up many statistical strategies and research questions. Linking to IRS filings would add a huge amount of value by giving more detail on many aspects of household finances and structure (Jackson et al., 2017; Collins et al., 2019; Rao and Risch, 2023). Linking individuals into commercial databases could also add a lot of insight relevant to understanding labor supply choices, particularly credit files that would provide information about household access to credit (Del Boca and Lusardi, 2003; Dobbie et al., 2020).

The NLSY has experience linking to administrative and public records at individual's local level, which provides very important context for employment decisions. For instance, linking to BLS state and local unemployment rate levels and changes by race would be valuable context where available. Similarly, information from the Bureau of Economic Analysis about state and local levels and changes in personal incomes, economic output, and regional price parity adjustments would add valuable context. Of course, the value of more detailed information always has to be balanced against privacy protection.

Prioritization of recommendations and tradeoffs

Given our expertise, the panel endeavored to prioritize concepts for inclusion based on their importance in Americans' lives, in scientific research, and in policy debates without penalizing concepts based on measurement difficulty. We trust that BLS has the comparative advantage in assessing feasibility and measurement strategy. However, we discussed measurement issues and pointed to relevant evidence, resources, and strategies.

We prioritized topics where new phenomena, new interest, and new data collection possibilities have emerged. Examples of newly common phenomena include more careful attention to platform-mediated

work arrangements and restrictive covenants. Also, given the rise of state policies mandating paid leave, we recommend deemphasizing measurement of access to leave and focus on use of leave and unmet need for leave. Examples of new interest include more attention to harassment and discrimination, greater attention to job schedule characteristics. Examples of new data collection possibilities include the possibility of linking to employers' job postings, providing context for new textual data on job characteristics across many employers, and the falling costs of linking to administrative data on respondents' employers.

We prioritized topics where the NLSY26's longitudinal component would be especially important. These are variables implicated in gradual, cumulative processes and those where separating individual stability from variability matters. Examples include cumulative occupational risk exposures that influence the emergence of certain illnesses and diseases, job mobility, search, and mismatch between pre-hire expectations and post-hire realizations of job quality.

We worked in three subpanels to develop potential recommendations, refined and combined these, then prioritized them using a full-panel poll and discussion. Subpanels worked to develop recommendations in each of the three domains, without worrying much about potential duplication to get independent assessments of areas at subpanel boundaries. Through reflection and discussion, we simplified this large set of sometimes overlapping recommendations in the Early Experiences and Work Arrangements subpanels into a smaller set of independent recommendations, where each recommendation could be advised for adoption independently of others. The Work Arrangements subpanel's recommendations were left as multiple and dependent because of its complexity. The heart of it is the recommendation to distinguish jobs into a particular set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive work arrangements. On top of that are additional, discrete recommendations. There was broad support from subpanel chairs and panelists that certain topics were high priority – such as the Work Arrangements categorization and the inclusion of stigmatized work alongside other types.

To prioritize the remaining set of recommendations, we conducted a poll of panelists to identify areas of consensus and disagreement. The poll presented each panelist with the set of recommendations, asking whether or not each had a chance to be identified as high priority. Every panelist had access to draft report language describing the analysis behind the recommendations. Among recommendations the panelist identified as possibly high priority to the panel, they were asked to rank the recommendations as high, medium, or low priority in their view. So, each panelist could put each recommendation into 4 categories: possibly high to group and high for me, possibly high to group and medium to me, possibly high to group and low for me, and not possibly high to group. The results were reported back to the chair and all panelists in advance of the final group meeting and used to set the agenda for discussion at that meeting. There was a high degree of consensus in the poll for about half the recommendations, and the panel agreed to assign those recommendations the consensus priority levels. Discussion focused on the other half of recommendations that lacked initial consensus. Through discussion, different views were aired; the final report and prioritization reflects the panel's degree of priority, consensus, concerns, and rationales.

Exhibit 3 below briefly summarizes our high, medium, and low priority topical recommendations for easy reference. The individual subpanel reports contain detailed information about research context and potential questions for each recommendation.

Exhibit 3. Summary list of prioritized topics

High Priority	
Information to enable administrative linkages: Collect identifying information on individuals and employers to enable administrative data linkages Wages and Hours: Include all kinds of earning, stigmatized or not Barriers to work Work Schedule: Control over schedule Schedule instability and unpredictability Leaves: Unmet need for leave Discrimination and Fairness: Perception of workplace discrimination & harassment Restrictive covenants: Noncompete, nondisclosure, and mandatory arbitration clauses Technology and Tasks: Computer and mechanical task complexity required Work location: Share of time at location of employer choice vs flexible Occupational health and safety risks: Exposure to Physical Risks Job Search and Beliefs: consistent measure for everyone	Employer monitoring and surveillance Training & development: Opportunities Work Arrangements: Measure 7 mutually exclusive and exhaustive work arrangements Improve question wording to determine if self-employed Expand measure of independent contractors and alter question wording Add probe for informal and platform work held during period covered by wave If in intermediated employee arrangement (temp help, PEO, contract company worker) collect name of employer and name/industry of client If platform worker: collect name(s) of platform If other contract company workers: measure additional aspects If independent contractors, all: measure if primarily work for one client Platform worker: capture and measure all types of platform work Drop questions about on-call employment
Medium Priority	
Youth employment: Summer youth employment School-connected work (e.g., for school credit internships) Work outside of school Work Schedule: Timing of work Leaves: Use of leave and its nature Job Search and Beliefs: Intensity Subjective job quality including most important determinant for how respondents value jobs (Mis)match between new job conditions and pre-hire expectations	Discrimination and Fairness: Experiences of respectful and unfair treatment, harassment, bullying, violence Occupational health and safety risks: Exposure to Psychosocial Risks Work stress Voice at Work: Control over job tasks, team, and organization Voice behaviors, safety, and efficacy Work Arrangements: If other staffing workers: measure if a PEO worker If self-employed, all: measure if incorporated and if have employees
Low Priority	
Wages: Test ways to reduce detail on pay types within job Volunteering and internships Job Search and Beliefs: Expectations about search outcomes (job transition)	Training and Development: Prospects for promotion Fringe Benefits: Update list of fringe benefits, drop flexible scheduling

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Administrative Data Linkages

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