Release of Mature and Young Women 1995 Survey Data

Data from the 1995 survey of mature and young women will soon be released. Included in the data is information gathered during the 17 interviews of the mature women and 18 interviews of the young women conducted since 1967 and 1968, respectively. The data will be available on compact disc.

The 1995 survey collected information from 2,711 members of the mature women cohort, or 53.3 percent of the original respondents. In the young women cohort, 3,019 respondents, or 58.5 percent of the original sample, participated in the survey. The retention rate is defined as the percentage of original respondents who were interviewed in 1995; included in the calculations are data from deceased and institutionalized respondents. In 1995, 13.1 percent of the original mature women sample and 2.4 percent of the original young women sample were deceased.

Two important changes for the women’s cohorts were introduced by the 1995 survey. This survey was the first to be administered using a computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI). Second, the two cohort groups were surveyed during the same period with the same instrument. This change increases the efficiency of surveying and makes it easier for researchers to compare the cohorts. The young and mature women of the NLS will continue to be surveyed at the same time and with the same instrument on a biennial schedule. As now, the CD-ROM will contain separate data for the two cohorts.

The 1995 survey generally collected the same core information as in previous years. Respondents provided labor force and work history information, as well as completed modules on education, health, income, assets, training, pensions, husband’s work experiences, and geographic mobility.

Some differences, however, exist between the 1995 survey and the 1992 survey of mature women and 1993 survey of young women. Elimination of the separate household record card is the first major difference. It is now more efficient to collect all household information within the actual questionnaire because of CAPI.

Second, the current labor force status and work history sections were revised. The questions on current labor force status were altered to reflect 1994 changes to the Current Population Survey and to make the women’s surveys more comparable to the NLSY79. The respondent’s work history and husband’s or partner’s work history sections were modeled after the NLSY79 to take advantage of CAPI’s ability to assist in creating a more complete work history.

The employer supplement sections administered to both cohorts in 1995 included a number of pension questions that were new for young women. These questions were based on those asked of the mature women in 1992.

The health section continued the core questions on disabilities, health conditions, and health insurance from previous years. In addition, new questions on menopausal status and activities in daily living were addressed to both cohorts. The mature and young women also answered questions about their automobile driving habits in the last 12 months.

Finally, the family background section contained a number of new questions. Widows in both cohorts were asked about the health and needs of her spouse during the last year of his life and about her financial situation after his death. Additionally, all mature women were asked about their ethnic background; young women who did not answer this question in 1993 were also asked about their ethnicity.

One major question module, the transfers section from the 1993 young women survey, was not included in 1995. The next data release will include transfer questions asked of both cohorts in the 1997 survey. This module, similar to the one in the 1993 young women’s survey, collected information from respondents about transfers of time and money to and from their parents.

The NLS of Mature Women Users’ Guide and the NLS of Young Women Users’ Guide are now available. These cohort-specific guides replace the previous NLS Users’ Guide, which included all cohorts. The new guides update information on the mature and young women found in the previous guide and include several new sections.

Mature and young women data are released on a CD-ROM that also contains documentation and search and retrieval software. Supplemental documents are distributed with each data set. Researchers interested in purchasing these data should contact NLS User Services (see back page for contact information).

NLSY97 on Youths’ Relationships with Parents

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) contains many questions involving the relationship between the youth and his or her parents or parent-figures. The characteristics and tenor of this relationship may have a profound effect on the future experiences of
the youth. This article discusses questions that describe the youth’s custodial and living arrangements, characteristics of the relationship between youths and their parents, and between the youth’s parents. It also compares the NLSY97 data to those available for other NLS cohorts.

Three different survey instruments collected details about the relationships between the youth and his or her parents in the first round of the NLSY97. During the Screener, Household Roster, and Non-resident Roster Questionnaire portion of the survey, a household member provided initial information about each parent of a NLSY97 youth, including age and exact relationship to the youth. The questionnaire, administered to the youth, collected data about topics such as any absent parent or parent-figure, the respondent’s opinion of each parent, and his or her perceptions of parental control. For the first survey round, one parent was asked to respond to the parent questionnaire, which gathers information about the parent’s background and the youth’s early life. This questionnaire also permits comparison to parallel data in the youth questionnaire on relationship topics.

Youth’s living and custodial arrangements

The first aspect of the parent and youth relationship that the NLSY97 examines is the youth’s current and past living situations. The survey initially defined the exact relationship between the parent and the youth. The responding parent then provided information concerning the youth’s history of living situations, spells living apart from parents, legal custodian, and home environment. The parent often answered questions about the youth’s early childhood that the youth would not be likely to remember.

A household member provided the initial information about the parents of the NLSY97 youth. The “Screener” questionnaire collected this information, first gathering a list of all household residents and their birth dates. It then established the relationship of each person in the household to the youth and to each other. Follow-up questions verified the exact relationship. The following parental relationships were established by the survey: Biological, step, adoptive, and foster. Round two of the survey will update relationship information;

however, the parent questionnaire will not be repeated in subsequent rounds.

An important factor in the youth’s early life involves his or her living situations. Respondents to the parent questionnaire first reported whether the youth lived with anyone else before living with the responding parent. The survey recorded the relationship of each adult the youth lived with or the type of institution where the youth lived during that time, and the dates when each situation changed.

All parents then reported whether the youth had ever lived apart from them for 3 months or more (since the youth first lived with them). For each spell apart, the parent named the institution or place where or the person with whom the youth lived, whether the arrangement was still in effect, and the year the arrangement changed. Additional questions recorded the total number of different addresses at which the youth lived before his or her 12th birthday and after his or her 12th birthday.

For each NLSY97 youth not living with both biological parents, the survey asked whether the responding parent held legal responsibility or legal custody for the youth. If only the youth’s biological mother is listed on the birth certificate, follow-up questions asked whether the biological father had ever been legally identified (e.g., blood test, court ruling, signed legal document). For adopted youths, data were collected on whether the youth ever lived with his or her biological mother or father.

Youths provided information about their home environment. Respondents born in 1982, 1983, or 1984 were asked two sets of questions about their typical household conditions. First, they stated whether their home usually had electricity and heat, a computer, a quiet place to study, or a dictionary in the past month. Youths living with a parent or guardian at the time of the survey were asked about the household environment in a typical week. The youth reported the number of days in a typical week his or her family participates in a religious activity together, does something enjoyable together, and eats dinner together.

Characteristics of relationship with parents

The NLSY97 also obtains information about the characteristics and tenor of the youth’s relationship with his or her parents. This information is collected from both the youth and the responding parent. Questions investigate the respondent’s contact with an absent parent, parents’ behavior toward the youth, and parents’ rule setting and discipline regarding the youth’s activities.

The self-administered portion of the youth questionnaire asked NLSY97 respondents a number of questions about any absent parent or parent-figure (e.g., biological or adoptive mother or father). After determining the month and year the NLSY97 respondent last lived with that parent, the respondent was asked about contact with the absent parent during the past 12 months. For each absent parent, the respondent was asked the following questions:

- Number of times youth contacted or tried to contact the absent parent either by mail or phone
- Number of times youth received a card, letter, or phone call from the absent parent
- Number of times youth visited the absent parent without spending the night
- Number of times youth stayed overnight at the absent parent’s home

Additional related information collected in the non-resident roster section of the “Screener,” questionnaire includes the distance the youth lives from his or her absent biological parents (if they are alive) or the date that the youth’s biological parents died.

The self-administered section of the round one youth survey further investigated the relationship between all respondents and their parents, whether present or absent (if the respondent had contact in the past 12 months). The survey asked respondents about the emotional and moral support provided by each parent or parent figure. A second question gathered information on whether the parent was permissive or strict about making sure the respondent did what he or she was supposed to do.

If the respondent was born in 1982, 1983, or 1984, additional data were collected on the respondent’s opinion of each parent. Youths stated whether they think highly of the parent, want to be like him or
helps the respondent do important activities. Information about the parent’s behavior includes:

- how often the parent praises the youth for doing well
- criticizes his or her ideas
- helps the respondent do important things
- blames the respondent for his or her problems
- makes plans with the respondent and cancels for no good reason

In addition, the survey gathered data on the youth’s opinion of how well the parent knows his or her close friends and their parents, the people the respondent is with when not at home, his or her teachers, and what the respondent is doing in school.

Finally, NLSY’97 respondents born in 1983 and 1984 and their responding parents were asked about the level of autonomy or parental control that determines the rules, if any, regarding the youth’s activities. The youth questionnaire asked about the person or persons who make decisions concerning the youths’ activities, including how late they may stay out at night, the kinds of TV shows or movies they may watch, and who they are allowed to “hang out” with. For each rule that was reportedly made only by the respondent’s parents, or jointly by the parents and the respondent, a follow-up question asked about the number of times the respondent broke the rules in the last 30 days. Information was also collected on what action the youth’s parent(s) would take if they found out that rules had been violated and about which parent would be most likely to handle the discipline.

To provide an opportunity for comparison of youth and parent perceptions about rule setting and discipline, responding parents and youth of youths born in 1983 or 1984 were asked a set of autonomy and control questions similar to those found in the youth questionnaire. For each rule detailed above, this section of the parent questionnaire first surveyed the responding parent on who makes that particular rule. Follow-up questions asked about the number of times that the youth broke rules in the last 30 days. The parent was also asked to state the person who would most likely handle the rule violation.

The round two survey will include many of the same questions on the youths’ relationship with their parents as during the first-year interview.

Parents’ relationship with each other

In round 1 of the NLSY97, both the youth and the responding parent provided information about the relationship the youth’s parents have with each other. This information allows researchers to investigate characteristics of the youth’s home environment. It also points to similarities or differences in the perceptions youths and their parents have about this relationship.

If the respondent was born in 1982, 1983, or 1984, the self-administered part of the youth questionnaire asked two sets of questions about the relationship of the respondent’s parents or parent-figures. Respondents living with one or both biological parents answered the first set. The questions addressed the behavior of either the respondents’ biological parents, if they lived with both, or of the biological parent the respondent lived with and the parents’ spouse or partner. This series asked about the frequency with which each parent displays the following behavior:

- Blames the partner for problems
- Criticizes the partner or the partner’s ideas
- Encourages the partner to do things that the partner considers important
- Expresses affection or love for the partner
- Is fair and willing to compromise when the partner disagrees
- Screams and yells at the partner when angry

Youths who do not live with either biological parent or who live with only their biological father answered the second set of questions. This series sought to determine the frequency of contact between the respondent’s biological parents and the level of friendliness or hostility in their relationship. Respondents first reported how often their biological parents spoke to each other, either face-to-face or on the phone (i.e., never, 3-6 times, about once a month, several times a week). The respondent then characterized the overall behavior of each biological parent toward the other, with choices ranging from ‘very friendly’ to ‘as hostile as you can imagine.’ Similar questions about parent relationships are asked in round 2, for youths born in 1983 or 1984.

The round one NLSY97 survey also asked two series of questions in the self-administered section of the parent questionnaire. First, if the youth was born in 1982, 1983, or 1984, the responding parent described the frequency with which the spouse or partner displays any of the behavior listed above. If the responding parent was one of the youth’s biological parents and the other biological parent did not reside in the household, the responding parent also answered the second set of questions about the frequency of contact with the other parent and the friendliness or hostility of their relationship.

Comparison to other NLS surveys

Information on respondents’ household composition is available for all cohorts for most survey years. This includes whether respondents’ parents live in the same household. However, relationships such as adoptive, step-, and foster parents are not distinguished for all cohorts or in all survey years.

The 1988 round of the NLSY97 collected retrospective data on the residential history of each respondent from birth to age 18. This Childhood Residence Calendar asked respondents to report their relationship to the primary adults with whom they lived during each year of their childhood and included options for children’s homes, detention centers, and other institutions. In addition, data on the Children of the NLSY79 include the child’s usual living arrangements at each interview date.

The Children of the NLSY79 age 10 and older (including the young adults) have answered questions similar to those used in the NLSY97 about their relationship with their parents and about their parents’ relationship with each other. These questions have been asked in each interview.
beginning in 1994. The wording of these questions is not identical to the NLSY97, however. Additionally, the Children of the NLSY79 who are age 10 to 14 have provided information in each survey since 1988 about who makes rules regarding their behavior.

**NLS Benefits Data**

BLS data show that benefits comprise a large and growing share of an employer’s cost for employee compensation. The average civilian worker in the United States received total compensation of $19.76 per hour. Of that, $14.30, or 72 percent, went to wages or salaries and $5.47, or 28 percent, went to cover the cost of benefits (BLS news release: Employer Costs for Employee Compensation - March 1998, USDL-98-285.) To help researchers understand who receives these benefits, many NLS surveys collect extensive information on this subject. This article provides readers with an overview of the benefits questions found in the various NLS surveys and directs interested users to sources of additional information.

**NLSY79**

Depending on the year of the survey, the NLSY79 benefits information can be found in the Current Population Survey (CPS) section and the employer supplement sections of the NLSY79 questionnaire. In every year except 1981, NLSY79 respondents provided information on whether their current or most recent job provided health insurance, life insurance, or paid vacation time or all three. Beginning in 1985, the benefits section also included questions about the availability of sick time, dental insurance, and maternity and paternity leave. In 1988, the benefits section was expanded again to cover profit sharing, retirement plans other than Social Security, and subsidized child care. Beginning in 1994, the benefits section no longer focused on only the CPS job (or “main” job since the last interview), but asked about benefits received from all of the respondent’s jobs.

Besides these yes or no questions, the benefits section probes deeper in a few areas. Starting in 1990, on top of the question about the receipt of paid vacations, the NLSY79 also recorded the number of vacation days to which they were entitled. While the raw data show that the typical (median) respondent received between 10 and 14 vacation days each year, a small but significant number received more than 50 vacation days yearly. In 1991, the survey began asking how many sick days a respondent could receive. The raw data show fewer firms offer sick leave benefits than vacation time. For example, in 1991 approximately one third of respondents (2,352 out of 6,035) were entitled to no sick days, compared to one fifth of respondents (1,301) who received no vacation days.

Researchers should be aware of two related issues when using these questions. First, the questions ask respondents if their jobs provide a particular benefit; respondents are not asked if they actually choose or make use of the benefit. For example, while many firms make health benefits available to all employees, many two-worker couples will choose coverage from only one employer and refuse coverage with the other. Additionally, some firms offer cafeteria-style plans that enable workers to choose among a variety of benefits. Therefore, even if an extensive list of benefits is available, some respondents may be limited in how many choices they may actually select.

The other issue requiring caution is that the sample universe changes depending on the particular survey. For example, from 1980 to 1992 only respondents who worked more than 20 hours a week were asked the benefits questions. Beginning in 1993, individuals working less than 20 hours a week first stated whether any benefits were made available. If these respondents reported that benefits were made available, then they completed the benefits section; otherwise, the section was skipped.

**NLSY79 Young Adults**

Benefits information is also available from the 1994 and 1996 NLSY79 Young Adult surveys, which are administered to children age 15 and older. These surveys asked the children of NLSY79 mothers a variety of questions about their work life. Each working young adult completed a set of employer supplements very similar to the ones administered to their mothers. Hence, in 1994 and 1996, the same benefits information is available for both the young adults and NLSY79 respondents.

Relatively few young adults answered the benefits questions. For example, in 1994 only 68 young adults had an employer who provided medical insurance and only 44 were provided with life insurance. Because of the young age of these respondents, small sample sizes are to be expected; however, users should anticipate a certain degree of imprecision when using these data.

**Original cohorts**

The collection of data about employee benefits began in the mid 1970s for the original cohorts. Because many of the older men had left the labor force by that time, benefits information is not available for this group. Young men first answered benefits questions in 1976, mature women in 1977, and young women in 1978. The original benefits questions for all three cohorts were the same. Respondents reported whether their current job provided them with health insurance, life insurance, a retirement program, training opportunities, profit sharing, stock options, free or discounted meals, free or discounted merchandise, paid sick leave, and paid vacations. Additionally, the young women’s survey included paid and unpaid maternity leave in its list of benefits questions. The benefits section was initially asked with regard to the main job only; in 1995, the women’s surveys began asking about benefits available at all jobs.

The mature women surveys asked about benefits in 1977, 1982, 1987, 1989, and 1995. The 1982 and 1987 surveys were expanded by questions on flexible work hours; in 1989, the survey added questions on paid and unpaid maternity leave, child day care, paid personal time, time off for child care, time off for elder care, and a flexible menu of possible benefits. Beginning in 1995, the survey dropped questions on free or discounted meals or merchandise, paid sick leave, and paid vacations. Additionally, the young women’s survey included paid and unpaid maternity leave in its list of benefits questions. The benefits section was initially asked with regard to the main job only; in 1995, the women’s surveys began asking about benefits available at all jobs.

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paid personal time and time off for child care as options. Respondents were also asked to rank their most important and most desired benefits in 1987. New categories in 1991 and 1993 included time off for elder care and a flexible menu of benefits. These later surveys also asked about the number of days available for paid vacation, personal time, and sick leave (1993 only). As with the mature women, the number of benefits choices was decreased in the 1995 and 1997 young women surveys.

In addition to the standard availability questions asked each year, the 1991 survey of young women included a greatly expanded benefits section. These questions provide researchers with a wealth of detail about the health insurance plans offered by employers. Researchers should note that a special health module was also inserted in the same survey. Hence, in 1991 researchers have details on both the health status and health insurance availability of a large number of women.

The 1991 benefits section asked if the employer provided health insurance and if the respondent selected this benefit. The section then asked for the plan’s name and whether the plan paid for hospital expenses and doctor bills. Information is also available on how much of the insurance premium was paid by the employer and the amount of the plan’s deductible. Next the section asked about dental insurance plans and determined what dental services were covered by the plan. Information about vision insurance and prescription drugs followed. The special expanded section ended with questions that determined whether the respondent was covered by a health maintenance organization (HMO) or another type of medical plan.

For More Information

Researchers have used NLS benefits data in a number of articles. Interested readers can peruse references and abstracts on the NLS on-line bibliography (http://www.chrr.ohio-state.edu/nls-bib/) by choosing “fringe benefits” from the descriptor list.

Readers who are planning to use the benefits data to perform their own research, or who want to learn more about benefits information, should investigate the topical guide sections in the Users’ Guide for each cohort of interest. These sections contain detailed tables showing the survey years in which each question was asked and how many respondents reported availability of a particular type of benefit. Readers can also explore these questions by directly searching the relevant CD-ROM for words like “vacation,” “benefit,” or “insurance.”

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Q1: Why are there so few responses to the “Highest Grade Completed” variables for the NLSY79, especially for recent surveys?

A1: In the first survey year, 1979, all respondents were asked to report the highest grade they had completed. In each survey since 1979, only those respondents who have attended school since the last interview are asked about the highest grade they have completed. This information is also combined into a single created variable reporting the highest grade completed for all interviewed respondents as of May 1 of the particular survey year (e.g., R51668. in 1996).

Q2: Is enrollment in literacy programs included in training or education variables in the NLSY79?

A2: For the 1979–94 NLSY79 surveys, the training section contains a question about the type of training program in which the respondent was or was enrolled (e.g., R47859.00–R47859.05 in 1994). One of the possible responses is “classroom training—basics skills.” This category includes instruction for a GED and basic instruction in English or mathematics. For the 1996 survey, a similar question asks what skills were learned in the program? (R54607.00–R54607.15) One response is improved or upgraded reading and writing skills. Although literacy programs are not included in these response categories. On the other hand, because there is no explicit mention of literacy programs in the response categories, respondents may not report them at all. As a result, it will be difficult to obtain accurate information on this topic.

Q3: Are the family poverty status variables in the NLSY79 (e.g., R51661 in 1996) adjusted for different regions of the country? Do they take varying economic conditions into account?

A3: Three Federal poverty standards are calculated each year: One for the contiguous 48 states, and one each for Alaska and one for Hawaii because the cost of living is significantly higher in these two States. The poverty status variables use the standard appropriate to the respondent’s state of residence. For example, the 1996 variables (for calendar year 1995 income) use the standard of $7,470 for a 1-person household in the lower 48 states, $9,340 in Alaska, and $8,610 in Hawaii. Each additional person in the family adds $2,560, $3,200, and $2,940 to those values, respectively.

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 on-line NLS Annotated Bibliography (http://www.chrr.ohio-state.edu/nls-bib/).


Future of Children, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Los Angeles, CA. [NLSY79 Children]


Brien, Michael J. and Willis, Robert J. “Costs and Consequences for the Fathers.” 95-143. [NLSY79]

Grogger, Jeffrey. “Incarceration-Related Costs of Early Childbearing.” 231-55. [NLSY79]

Hotz, Joseph V.; McElroy, Susan Williams; and Sanders, Seth G. “The Impacts of Teenage Childbearing on Mothers and the Consequences of those Impacts for Government.” 55-90. [NLSY79]

Moore, Kristin A.; Morrison, Donna Ruane; and Greene, Angela Dungee. “Effects on the Children Born to Adolescent Mothers.” 145-173. [NLSY79, NLSY79 Children]
Are You Working With NLS Data?

If you are, we are interested in your work!

- Have you received funding to sponsor a project using NLS data?
- Are you working on a paper that uses NLS data?
- Have you published a recent paper using NLS data?

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