

**Information Collection Request for
The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997
OMB # 1220-0157
Part B**

Submitted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics

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B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

1. Respondent Universe and Respondent Selection Method

This section summarizes the primary features of the sampling and statistical methods used to collect data and produce estimates for the NLSY97. Additional technical details are provided in the NLSY97 Technical Sampling Report, available online at <http://www.nlsinfo.org/preview.php?filename=nlsy97techsamprpt.pdf>. Chapter 2 of the report describes the design of the NLSY97 sample. Chapter 3 describes the sample-selection process. Chapter 4 describes the sample weighting process. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the accuracy and representativeness of the sample.

Additional information about statistical methods and survey procedures is available in the NLSY97 User's Guide at:

<http://www.nlsinfo.org/nlsy97/docs/97HTML00/97guide/toc.htm>

The initial sample was selected to represent (after appropriate weighting) the total U.S. population (including military personnel) 12 to 16 years of age on December 31, 1996. The sample selection procedure included an overrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics to facilitate statistically reliable analyses of these racial and ethnic groups. Appropriate weights are developed after each round so that the sample components can be combined to aggregate to the overall U.S. population of the same ages. Weights are needed to adjust for differences in selection probabilities, subgroup differences in participation rates, random fluctuations from known population totals, and survey undercoverage. Computation of the weights begins with the base weight and then adjusts for household screener nonresponse, sub-sampling, individual nonresponse, and post-stratification of the nonresponse-adjusted weights. The number of sample cases in 1997, the first round, was 8,984. Retention rate information for subsequent rounds is shown in the table below. BLS anticipates approximately the same retention rate in Round 14 that was attained in Round 13. In Round 12, the retention rate was close to that of Round 9. We saw an increase in retention rate in Round 10, a modest decline in Round 11, and another increase in Round 12. Only sample members who completed an interview in Round 1 are considered in-scope for subsequent rounds. Even if NORC is unable to complete an interview for an in-scope sample member in one round, they attempt to complete an interview with that sample member in each subsequent round. The interview schedule is designed to pick up crucial information that was not collected in the missed interviews.

The schedule and sample retention rates of past survey rounds are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. NLSY97 Fielding Periods and Sample Retention Rates

Round	Months conducted	Total respondents	Retention rate	Number of deceased sample members	Retention rate excluding the deceased
1	February–October 1997 and March–May 1998	8,984	—	—	—
2	October 1998–April 1999	8,386	93.3	7	93.4
3	October 1999–April 2000	8,209	91.4	16	91.5
4	November 2000–May 2001	8,081	89.9	15	90.1
5	November 2001–May 2002	7,883	87.7	25	88.0
6	November 2002–May 2003	7,898	87.9	30	88.2
7	November 2003–July 2004	7,755	86.3	37	86.7
8	November 2004–July 2005	7,503	83.5	45	83.9
9	October 2005–July 2006	7,338	81.7	60	82.2
10	October 2006–May 2007	7,559	84.1	77	84.9
11	October 2007–June 2008	7,418	82.6	90	83.4
12	October 2008 – June 2009	7,490	83.4	103	84.3
13	September 2009 – April 2010	7,561	84.2	112	85.2

Note: The retention rate is defined as the percentage of base year respondents who were interviewed in a given survey year.

2. Design and Procedures for the Information Collection

The NLSY97 includes personal interviews with all living Round 1 respondents, regardless of whether they subsequently become institutionalized, join the military, or move out of the United States. We employ a thorough and comprehensive strategy to contact and interview sample members. At each interview, detailed information is gathered about relatives and friends who could assist NORC field staff in locating respondents if they cannot readily be found in a subsequent survey round. Every effort is made to locate respondents. Interviewers are encouraged to attempt to contact respondents until they reach them. There is no arbitrary limit on the number of call-backs.

Preceding the data collection, the NORC interviewers are carefully trained, with particular emphasis placed on resolving sensitive issues that may have appeared in the pretest and in prior rounds. Most of the NORC interviewers have lengthy experience in the field from having participated in earlier NLSY97 rounds as well as from involvement with the NLSY79 and other NORC surveys. All new recruits are given one day of personal training on general interviewing techniques, followed by three days of personal training on the questionnaire and field procedures. Experienced interviewers receive self-study training consisting of over 8 hours on specially designed materials requiring study of the questionnaire and procedural specifications, with exercises on new or difficult sections and procedures.

Field interviewers are supervised by NORC Field Managers and their associates. NORC has divided the U.S. into 10 regions, each supervised by a Field Manager who is responsible for staffing and for the quality of field work in that region. A ratio of 1 supervisor to 15 interviewers is the standard arrangement. Field Managers are, in turn, supervised by one of the two Field Project Managers.

The interview content is prepared by professional staff at BLS, CHRR, and NORC. When new materials are incorporated into the questionnaire, assistance is generally sought from appropriate experts in the specific substantive area.

Because sample selection took place in 1997 in preparation for the baseline interview, sample composition will remain unchanged.

Some new activities are planned in Round 14 to supplement the main interview.

Release of Postsecondary Education Records

With BLS encouragement, a research team headed by Chandra Muller of the University of Texas at Austin has submitted a grant proposal to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to collect college transcripts and other postsecondary enrollment information for NLSY97 sample members. If this proposal is funded, BLS would seek to collect signed permission forms from respondents to grant BLS permission to obtain transcripts. A draft permission form is provided in attachment 7.

Permission will be sought from all respondents who have reported that they received a high school diploma or GED or completed coursework in a postsecondary degree program. We will seek permission from this broad group, rather than just the respondents who reported some college coursework, to help validate the educational attainment information that respondents have provided during the NLSY97 interviews. Some respondents who reported college coursework might not actually have completed such coursework. Similarly, some respondents who did not report any college experience may actually have attended college. For NLSY97 respondents who sign the permission form, we will obtain their transcripts and other information about college attendance through the National Student Clearinghouse (<http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/>).

Releases would be sought from respondents first by field interviewers at the time of the Round 14 in-person interview. A follow-up mail effort would take place after the close of the Round 14 data-collection period and would request return of signed releases from sample members completing the Round 14 interview by phone or not completing the Round 14 interview at all. We estimate by Round 14 that 7,425 respondents will have completed high school, earned a GED, or completed a term in a postsecondary degree program. Including respondents completing and not completing the Round 14 interview, we estimate that 6,311 will provide signed releases. BLS and NORC plan to ask Round 14 pretest respondents to sign release forms to test respondent cooperation, but NORC does not actually plan to obtain transcripts for pretest respondents. If the grant funding has been approved in time for the main fielding of Round 14, BLS and NORC will ask respondents to sign release forms, and NORC will obtain the transcripts for respondents who grant their consent.

We estimate the respondent burden to read and sign the transcript release is 1.5 minutes per respondent.

We emphasize that collection of releases will take place only if NICHD awards a grant to fund the collection of the releases and the subsequent collection of college transcripts. Approval to collect releases was received as part of the Round 13 OMB clearance.

NIR Questionnaire

Although we continue to have excellent rates of return among sample members who missed some previous rounds, the NLSY97 now has a few hundred respondents who are extremely unlikely to complete an interview in any given round. At the start of Round 14, we expect there to be about 650 respondents who were last interviewed prior to Round 9. In Round 12, respondents who had missed at least 5 rounds completed interviews at a rate of 7.9%. Conceiving of these individuals as likely nonrespondents rather than as potential respondents may help us improve our understanding of our sample and our ability to convert long-term nonrespondents. We plan to field an experimental nonresponse questionnaire among sample members who have extremely low probabilities of completion.

The purpose of a noninterview respondent (NIR) questionnaire would be to capture key status information about the sample member's life. This information could permit nonresponse analysis to understand whom we are missing and what difference it might make in our analytic results. In addition, a brief, minimally intrusive "interview" might slightly increase these sample members' willingness to participate in a full interview in subsequent rounds.

Respondents who had not completed the prior 5 interviews would be eligible for the NIR questionnaire. They would be asked to complete an NIR questionnaire if they refuse the first three requests for a full interview or for some other reason a field manager believes that the case cannot result in a completed interview. We would offer a \$14 incentive because it is Round 14. NIR questionnaire respondents would receive a modified thank you letter. These cases would still be recorded as refusals, but would also have an NIR questionnaire completed. We would still secure consent from respondents, so that we could provide the NIR questionnaire responses in the public-use data file. Respondents completing the NIR questionnaire would be fielded for the main interview in the next round as usual. Respondents would still get the full NIR premium in a future round if they completed the interview. In future rounds, if the NIR questionnaire were continued, respondents would not be permitted to complete NIR questionnaires in two consecutive rounds. Given the nature of the sample, the presumption is that almost all of these NIR questionnaires would be completed by telephone. We do not expect to field NIR questionnaires with individuals who completed the Round 13 NIR questionnaire.

Given a 7.9% completion rate of the full interview among this group in Round 12, we might expect 120 completed NIR questionnaires based on a 20% completion rate of the NIR questionnaire among the estimated 600 respondents at the start of Round 14 who were last interviewed prior to Round 9.

A draft of the NIR questionnaire is in attachment 8.

Collection of birth certificates in pretest

Use of administrative records is a promising technique that can improve data quality and reduce respondent burden. As an initial investigation into this technique, we propose a small trial collection of birth certificates in the Round 14 pretest. Birth certificates are the optimal source of information about birth weight, a measure of considerable research interest given its relationship with child development and lifetime obesity, among other outcomes. In the Round 14 pretest, we will offer respondents \$10 to permit us to record their birth certificate using a handheld scanner at the time of the in-person interview, or \$5 to sign a waiver granting us access to their birth certificate from vital statistics agencies. Telephone interview respondents would be eligible for the same offer, to be transacted through mail. Such a trial will primarily provide insight into respondent reactions and concerns regarding the release of administrative records, as well as the logistical issues surrounding the handling, acquiring, and coding of such documents.

3. Maximizing Response Rates

A number of the procedures that are used to maximize response rate already have been discussed in items 1 and 2 above. The other component of missing data is item nonresponse. Nonresponse includes respondents refusing to answer or not knowing the answer to a question. Almost all items in the NLSY97 have low levels of nonresponse. For example, in prior rounds there was virtually no item nonresponse for basic questions like the type of residence respondents lived in (YHHI-4400) or the highest grade of school respondents had ever attended (YSCH-2857).

Cognitively harder questions like, “How many hours did you work per week?” (YEMP-23901) have low levels of nonresponse. In the hours per week example, 6 individuals out of 2,810 (0.2%) did not answer the question in Round 8.

Sensitive questions have the highest nonresponse. Table 4 presents examples of round 10 questionnaire items that are most sensitive or cognitively difficult. Even very personal questions about sex have low rates of nonresponse. The top row of the table shows that the vast majority of respondents (over 95%) were willing and able to answer the question, “Did you have sexual intercourse since the last interview?” The third row shows that only 1.2% of respondents did not respond to the question on marijuana usage since the last interview. The fourth row shows that very few respondents (0.5%) did not answer whether they had carried a handgun since the last interview. Lastly, almost all respondents (0.6% nonresponse rate) were willing to reveal whether they had earned money from a job in the past year, but many did not know or refused to disclose exactly how much they had earned (20.4% nonresponse rate). Because high nonresponse rates were expected for the income amount question, individuals who did not provide an exact answer were asked to estimate their income from a set of predetermined ranges. This considerably reduces nonresponse on the income question. Only 6.4% of those who were asked to provide a range of income did not respond.

Table 4. Examples of Nonresponse Rates for Some Round 10 Sensitive Questions

Q Name	Question	Number Asked	Number Refused	Number Don't Know	% Nonresponse
YSAQ2-299B	Have Sex Since Date of Last Interview? ¹	7,460	283	25	4.1%
YSAQ-370C	Use Marijuana Since Date of Last Interview?	7,460	73	20	1.2%
YSAQ-380	Carry a Handgun Since Date of Last Interview?	7,460	32	9	0.5%
YINC-1400	Receive Work Income in 2003?	7,559	14	28	0.6%
YINC-1700	How Much Income from All Jobs in 2003?	6,386	48	1,252	20.4%
YINC-1800	Estimated Income from All Jobs in 2003? ²	1,300	37	46	6.4%

¹ Asked of respondents who have previously reported having sexual intercourse who do not report a spouse or partner in the household.

² Asked of respondents who were unable or unwilling to answer the previous question (YINC-1700).

To reduce the proportion of “don't know” or “refused” responses to questions on income or assets (such as YINC-1700, shown in table 4), respondents who do not provide exact dollar answers are asked follow-up questions designed to elicit approximate information. For many income categories, the respondents are asked to select the applicable category from a predefined list of ranges. The approach for asset questions is slightly different: The initial question asks the respondent to provide an exact value, but if he or she is unable or unwilling to do so, interviewers are instructed to ask the respondent to define a range for the value using whatever values he or she feels are appropriate. If the respondent does not know or refuses to provide either an exact value or a range, a follow-up question asks him or her to select the appropriate range from a predefined list. This method provides researchers with some information on income, asset, and debt amounts when the respondent is reluctant or unable to furnish an exact figure.

4. Testing of Questionnaire Items

BLS is cautious about adding items to the NLSY97 questionnaire. Because the survey is longitudinal, poorly designed questions can result in flawed data and lost opportunities to capture contemporaneous information about important events in respondents' lives. Poorly designed questions also can cause respondents to react negatively, making their future cooperation less likely. Thus, the NLSY97 design process employs a multi-tiered approach to the testing and review of questionnaire items.

When new items are proposed for the NLSY97 questionnaire, we often adopt questions that have been used previously in probability sample surveys with respondents resembling the NLSY97 sample. We have favored questions from the other surveys in the BLS National Longitudinal Surveys program to facilitate intergenerational comparisons. We also have used items from the Current Population Survey, the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances, the National Science Foundation-funded General Social Survey, and other Federally funded surveys.

All new questions are reviewed in their proposed NLSY97 context by survey methodologists who consider the appropriateness of questions (reference period, terms and definitions used, sensitivity, and so forth). Questions that are not well-tested with NLSY97-type respondents undergo cognitive testing with convenience samples of respondents similar to the NLSY97 sample members.

Existing questions are also reviewed each year. Respondents' age and their life circumstances change, as does the societal environment in which the survey is conducted. Reviews of the data help us to identify questions that may cause respondent confusion, require revised response categories, or generate questionable data. Sources of information for these reviews include the questionnaire response data themselves, comments made by interviewers or respondents during the course of the interview, interviewer remarks after the interview, interviewer inquiries or comments throughout the course of data collection, other-specify coding, and comparison of NLSY97 response data to other sources for external validation. We also watch carefully the "leading edge" respondents, who answer some questions before the bulk of the sample – for example, the first respondents to attend graduate school or to get a divorce. These respondents are often atypical, but their interviews can reveal problems in question functionality or comprehensibility.

A comprehensive pretest is planned as part of this information collection request and would occur approximately two months preceding each round of the main NLSY97 to test survey procedures and questions. This pretest includes a heterogeneous sample of 201 respondents of various racial, ethnic, geographic, and socio-economic backgrounds. On the basis of this pretest, the various questionnaire items, particularly those being asked for the first time, are evaluated with respect to question sensitivity and validity. When serious problems are revealed during the pretest, the problematic questions are deleted from the main NLSY97 instrument.

Although further edits to questionnaire wording are extremely rare, we monitor the first several hundred interviews each round with particular care. Based on this monitoring, field interviewers receive supplemental training on how best to administer questions that seem to be causing difficulty in the field or generating unexpected discrepancies in the data.

A. Round 14 questions that have not appeared in previous rounds of the NLSY97 include:

Assets 30 questions: The assets section has been redesigned for respondents who are turning 30. This section is based on the Assets 25 section. The section has been streamlined and the questions have been reorganized to reduce respondent burden. Respondents will be asked the housing assets questions in the Assets section rather than in the Household Information section in rounds in which they are not asked the Assets 30 questions.

Discouraged worker questions: Several questions will be added to the Employment section to identify discouraged workers. These questions are asked in conjunction with existing questions on job search for current gaps in employment. The questions ask if the respondent has been looking for work in the last 4 weeks, whether he or she currently wants a job, if he or she would be available to start work if a job was offered, and the main reason he or she has not been looking for a job in the last 4 weeks. These questions are adapted from the basic monthly Current Population Survey and have been included in the CPS section of some earlier rounds of NLSY97. The CPS section was last fielded in Round 10.

Risk Preference Questions: Questions on risk preference, which also are asked in Round 24 of the NLSY79, have been included in the Tell Us What You Think section of the Round14 questionnaire. The first three questions are based on questions from Rounds 15 and 20-22 of the NLSY79. These questions (RISK_1, RISK_2, and RISK_3) ask respondents to choose between two alternative jobs that differ in their income risk. After consulting with experts who introduced similar changes to risk preference questions in the Health and Retirement Study, the questions were slightly reworded for inclusion in NLSY79 Round 24 so respondents are asked to choose between two new jobs rather than between their current job and a hypothetical new job. This change eliminates the ability of respondents to favor the "status quo" regardless of their attitudes toward risk.

These risk preference questions are important for several reasons. First, these questions provide us with direct, high-quality, scientific measures of individuals' innate preferences toward risk. In particular, these measures have proven to be important predictors of individuals' willingness to take risks in the labor market, including their decisions to change employers, to change occupations, and to enter or exit self-employment. Second, several recent studies have shown that individuals' risk preferences change with age and other life experiences. It would be useful to ask these questions of young respondents and consider asking them again after a gap of several years. Third, researchers are increasingly using these measures of risk preference to explain phenomena other than labor market transitions. For example, these measures have been shown to be highly predictive of the decision to

marry, divorce, or hold various investment portfolios. Finally, including these questions in both NLSY cohorts allows us to compare responses across cohorts.

We propose to add two additional questions, which also are being asked in Round 24 of the NLSY79. RISK 4 asks respondents to rate (on a scale of 0 to 10) their willingness to take risks in general. RISK_5A through RISK_5H ask respondents to rate their willingness to take risks while driving, in financial matters, with respect to health, and in other aspects of life. These questions—which are based on questions asked in the 2004 German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP)—will enable researchers to learn whether willingness to accept income risk is correlated with willingness to accept other forms of risk.

Income questions: In round 14, the program participation section has been greatly reduced. As part of this reduction, a couple of questions have been shifted to the income section to ask about income from government programs. These questions are similar in design to other income questions in that section and use similar wording to questions that had previously appeared in the program participation section.

Personality Traits: The Round 14 questionnaire will include personality items that were approved for collection in Round 12 but were deleted from the survey because of excess administration time in that round's instrument. These questions are included in the draft instrument in the YTEL section.

A list of all changes to the NLSY97 questionnaire from rounds 13 to 14 is shown in attachment 9.

5. Statistical Consultant

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The sample design was conducted by NORC, which continues the interviewing fieldwork.