

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

**Submitted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics**

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## SUMMARY

This package requests clearance for the pretest and main fielding of Round 15 of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The main NLSY97 sample includes 8,984 respondents who were born in the years 1980 through 1984 and lived in the United States when the survey began in 1997. Sample selection was based on information provided during the first round of interviews. This cohort is a representative national sample of the target population of young adults. The sample includes an overrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics to facilitate statistically reliable analyses of these racial and ethnic groups. Appropriate weights are provided so that the sample components can be combined in a manner to aggregate to the overall U.S. population of the same ages.

The NLSY97 pretest sample includes 201 respondents who were born in the years 1979 through 1984 and lived in the United States at the time of the initial pretest fielding in 1996. Pretest data are used only for project operational and methodological information and are not released to individuals outside of the project team.

The survey is funded primarily by the U. S. Department of Labor. Additional funding has been provided in some years by the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Defense, and Justice, and the National Science Foundation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has overall responsibility for the project. The project is managed by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago and the Center for Human Resource Research (CHRR) at The Ohio State University. NORC handles the overall design and management, interviewing, initial data preparation, and weighting. Additional data cleanup and preparation, the development of final documentation and the preparation of public-use data files are handled by CHRR.

The data collected in this survey are part of a larger effort that involves repeated interviews administered to a number of cohorts in the U. S. Many of the questions are identical or very similar to questions previously approved by OMB that have been asked in other cohorts of the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS). Many of the questions in the NLSY97 also have been designed to reflect the changing nature of institutions and the different problems facing this group of young people. Those data elements of a particularly sensitive nature and those not previously collected are justified in this document.

## SUPPORTING STATEMENT

### *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) A Survey of Persons who were Ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996 Rationale, Objectives, and Analysis of Content*

#### **A. Justification**

##### **1. Necessity for the Data Collection**

This statement covers the pretest and main fielding of Round 15 of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The NLSY97 is a nationally representative sample of persons who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) contracts with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago and the Center for Human Resource Research (CHRR) at The Ohio State University to interview these youths on a yearly basis to study how young people make the transition from full-time schooling to the establishment of their families and careers. The longitudinal focus of this survey requires information to be collected about the same individuals over many years in order to trace their education, training, work experience, fertility, income, and program participation.

The mission of the Department of Labor (DOL) is, among other things, to promote the development of the U.S. labor force and the efficiency of the U.S. labor market. The BLS contributes to this mission by gathering information about the labor force and labor market and disseminating it to policymakers and the public so that participants in those markets can make more informed and, thus more efficient, choices. The charge to the BLS to collect data related to the labor force is extremely broad, as reflected in Title 29 USC Section 1:

***“The general design and duties of the Bureau of Labor Statistics shall be to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with labor, in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and especially upon its relation to capital, the hours of labor, the earnings of laboring men and women, and the means of promoting their material, social, intellectual, and moral prosperity.”***

The collection of these data contributes to the BLS mission by aiding in the understanding of labor market outcomes faced by individuals in the early stages of career and family development. See attachment 1 for Title 29 USC Sections 1 and 2.

##### **2. Purpose of Survey and Data Collection Procedures**

The major purpose of the data collection is to examine the transition from school to the labor market and into adulthood. The study relates each respondent’s educational, family, and community background to his or her success in finding a job and establishing a career. During Round 1, the study included a testing component sponsored by the Department of Defense that assessed the aptitude and achievement of the youths in the study so that these factors can be related to career outcomes. This study, begun when most participants were in middle school or high school, has followed them as they enter college or training programs and join the labor force. Continued yearly interviews will allow researchers and policymakers to continue examining the transition from school to work. This study will help researchers and policymakers to identify the antecedents and causes for difficulties some youths experience in making the school-to-work transition. By comparing these data to similar data from previous NLS cohorts, researchers and policymakers will be able to identify and understand some of the dynamics of the labor market and whether and how the experiences of this cohort of young people differ from those of earlier cohorts.

The NLSY97 has several characteristics that distinguish it from other data sources and make it uniquely capable of meeting the goals described above. The first of these is the breadth and depth of the types of information that are being collected. It has become increasingly evident in recent years that a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of labor force activity requires a theoretical framework that draws on several disciplines, particularly economics, sociology, and psychology. For example, the exploration of the determinants and consequences of the labor force behavior and experience of this cohort requires information about (1) the individual’s family background and ongoing demographic experiences; (2) the character of all aspects of the environment with which the individual interacts; (3) human capital inputs such as formal schooling and training; (4) a complete record of the individual’s

work experiences; (5) the behaviors, attitudes, and experiences of family members, including spouses and children; and (6) a variety of social psychological measures, including attitudes toward specific and general work situations, personal feelings about the future, and perceptions of how much control one has over one's environment.

A second major advantage of the NLSY97 is its longitudinal design. This design permits investigations of labor market dynamics that would not be possible with one-time surveys and allows directions of causation to be established with much greater confidence than cross-sectional analyses permit. Also, the considerable geographic and environment information available for each respondent for each survey year permits a more careful examination of the impact that local labor market conditions have on the employment, education, and family experiences of this cohort and their families.

Third, the supplemental samples of blacks and Hispanics make possible more detailed statistical analyses of those groups than would otherwise be possible.

The NLSY97 is part of a broader group of surveys that are known as the BLS National Longitudinal Surveys program. In 1966, the first interviews were administered to persons representing two cohorts, Older Men ages 45-59 in 1966 and Young Men ages 14-24 in 1966. The sample of Mature Women ages 30-44 in 1967 was first interviewed in 1967. The last of the original four cohorts was the Young Women, who were ages 14-24 when first interviewed in 1968. The survey of Young Men was discontinued after the 1981 interview, and the last survey of the Older Men was conducted in 1990. The Young and Mature Women surveys were discontinued after the 2003 interviews. In 1979, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), which includes persons who were ages 14–21 on December 31, 1978, began. The NLSY79 was conducted yearly from 1979 to 1994 and has been conducted every two years since 1994. One of the objectives of the National Longitudinal Surveys program is to examine how well the nation is able to incorporate young people into the labor market. These earlier surveys provide comparable data for the NLSY97.

The National Longitudinal Surveys are used by BLS and other government agencies to examine a wide range of labor market issues. The most recent BLS news release that examines NLSY97 data was published on January 28, 2010, and is available online at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsyth.pdf>. In addition to BLS publications, analyses have been conducted in recent years by other agencies of the Executive Branch, the Government Accountability Office, and the Congressional Budget Office. The surveys also are used extensively by researchers in a variety of academic fields. A comprehensive bibliography of journal articles, dissertations, and other research that have examined data from all National Longitudinal Surveys cohorts is available at <http://www.nlsbibliography.org/>.

More information about survey applications is provided in attachment 2.

### **3. Improved Information Technology to Reduce Burden**

CHRR and NORC have led the industry in survey automation and continue to use state-of-the-art methods for the NLSY97. This includes the continued use of computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) for the survey. For sensitive questions, such as those about drug or alcohol use, the NLSY97 uses an audio computer assisted self-interview (ACASI) that allows the respondent to see the questions on the screen and listen to them through earphones and record the answers on the keyboard. This method helps to make the respondent more comfortable with these questions and encourages more truthful and complete responses. CAPI interviews reduce respondent burden and produce data that can be prepared for release and analysis faster and more accurately than is the case with pencil-and-paper interviews. Mode experiments on another NLS cohort showed that the same interview took 10 percent less time to administer using a computer. To efficiently reach respondents who do not have telephones or who object to spending expensive minutes to receive phone calls on their cellular telephones, we will purchase inexpensive pre-paid cell phones to give to respondents so they may participate in a telephone interview. These phones can be purchased for approximately ten dollars and have lasting value only if the respondent chooses to pre-pay for additional minutes. The existence of these telephones greatly improves our ability to reach certain respondents who otherwise may require repeated in-person visits before a completed interview is obtained. Finally, the use of computer-assisted recorded interviewing (CARI) reduces respondent burden by introducing recordings of the main interview for data quality assurance to replace post-interview validation calls.

#### **4. Efforts to Identify Duplication**

We do not know of a national longitudinal survey that samples this age bracket and explores an equivalent breadth of substantive topics including labor market status and characteristics of jobs, education, training, aptitudes, health, fertility, marital history, income and assets, participation in government programs, attitudes, sexual activity, criminal and delinquent behavior, household environment, and military experiences. Data collection for the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) is less frequent and addresses physical and social health-related behaviors rather than focusing on labor market experiences. The studies sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics do not include the birth cohorts 1980 through 1984. The Children of the NLSY79, also part of the NLS program, spans the NLSY97 age range and touches on many of the same subjects but does not yield nationally representative estimates for these birth cohorts. Further, the NLSY97 is a valuable part of the NLS program as a whole, and other surveys would not permit the kinds of cross-cohort analyses that are possible using the various cohorts of the NLS program.

The repeated collection of NLSY97 information permits consideration of employment, education, and family issues in ways not possible with any other available data set. The combination of (1) longitudinal data covering the time from adolescence; (2) a focus on youths and young adults; (3) national representation; (4) large minority samples; and (5) detailed availability of education, employment and training, demographic, health, child outcome, and social-psychological variables make this data set and its utility for social science policy research on youth issues unique.

#### **5. Involvement of Small Organizations**

The NLSY97 is a survey of individuals in household and family units and therefore does not involve small organizations.

#### **6. Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection**

The NLSY97 has been conducted annually since it began, and that frequency has been essential for accurately capturing the educational, training, labor market, and household transitions that young people typically experience. As NLSY97 respondents reach their late 20s and early 30s, increasing the length of time between rounds becomes more feasible, but doing so still would affect the quality of the data in two ways. First, retention rates for the sample would be expected to decrease as it becomes harder to track sample members, especially those with less employment or residential stability. When the NLSY79 went from annual to biennial interviewing after 1994, retention rates, which had always been above 90 percent, began to decline, reaching 80 percent within four rounds. Declining retention rates could introduce some bias into survey estimates.

Second, a longer spacing between interviews could make it more difficult for respondents to recall the details of their experiences. When the NLSY79 went from annual to biennial interviewing, the BLS found that respondents failed to report almost one-third of their jobs that had started and ended in the first year of the new two-year recall period. Also, reports of the timing of unemployment insurance and food stamp receipt and dates of separation and divorce were affected.

The precise timing and dating of demographic, socio-economic, and employment-related events, so crucial to most labor force analysis, may be impossible to reconstruct accurately through retrospective data collection that extends very far into the past. For example, there is evidence that dates of events of fundamental importance such as marriage and birth histories are subject to considerable error at the disaggregated level when collected retrospectively. Some respondents even have difficulty recalling when their marriages began or ended. Also, accurate information about household structure, how it changes over time, and how this relates to changes in family income and labor force dynamics is difficult to reconstruct retrospectively, as is the information on the health and related behaviors of the respondents, their spouses, and their children. Information of a subjective nature also can be reported accurately only when it is collected as contemporaneously as possible. Recollection of attitudes may be colored by subsequent experiences or reflect a rationalization of subsequent successes or failures. Attitudes as widely diverse as one's ideas about women's roles or how one describes one's health as of an earlier period can be recollected inaccurately, even when respondents are trying to be as honest as they can. In addition, the further in the past one tries to recall events, objective or subjective, the greater the likelihood of faulty recall. The recall of events

or attitudes is often biased either by a tendency to associate the event with major life cycle changes (that may or may not be in temporal proximity to what one is trying to recall) or to move the event into the more recent past.

#### **7. Special Circumstances**

None of the listed special circumstances apply.

#### **8. Federal Register Notice and Consultations**

One comment was received as a result of the Federal Register notice published in Volume 75, No. 245, on December 22, 2010. The comment, which was e-mailed to BLS on December 22, 2010, expressed the opinion that the survey does not benefit the citizens of the country.

There have been numerous consultations regarding the NLSY97. In 1988, the National Science Foundation sponsored a conference to consider the future of the NLS. This conference consisted of representatives from a variety of academic, government and nonprofit research and policy organizations. The participants endorsed the notion of conducting a new youth survey. The NLSY97 incorporates many of the major recommendations that came out of that conference.

The NLS program also has a technical review committee that provides advice on interview content and long-term objectives. That group meets twice each year. Table 1 below shows the current members of that committee.

**Table 1. National Longitudinal Surveys Technical Review Committee (2010)**

<p>Amitabh Chandra, Professor John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University Mailbox 26 79 JFK Street Cambridge, MA 02138 Email: <a href="mailto:Amitabh.Chandra@ksg.harvard.edu">Amitabh.Chandra@ksg.harvard.edu</a> Phone: 617-496-7356</p>	<p>Janet Currie, Professor Department of Economics Columbia University Room 1038 IAB 420 West 118th Street New York, NY 10027 Email: <a href="mailto:jc2663@columbia.edu">jc2663@columbia.edu</a> Phone: 212-854-4520</p>	<p>Jeff Grogger, Professor Harris School of Public Policy University of Chicago Suite 139 1155 E. 60th Street Chicago, IL 60637 E-mail: <a href="mailto:jgrogger@uchicago.edu">jgrogger@uchicago.edu</a> Phone: 773-834-0973</p>
<p>Guang Guo, Professor Department of Sociology University of North Carolina CB# 3210 Chapel Hill, NC 27599 Email: <a href="mailto:guang_guo@unc.edu">guang_guo@unc.edu</a> Phone: 919-962-1246</p>	<p>Lingxin Hao, Professor Department of Sociology Johns Hopkins University Baltimore, MD 21218 Email: <a href="mailto:hao@jhu.edu">hao@jhu.edu</a> Phone: 410-516-4022</p>	<p>Judith Hellerstein, Professor Department of Economics University of Maryland 3105 Tydings Hall College Park, MD 20742 Email: <a href="mailto:hellerst@econ.umd.edu">hellerst@econ.umd.edu</a> Phone: 301-405-3545</p>
<p>Scott Huettel, Associate Professor Department of Psychology and Neuroscience Duke University Box 90999 Durham, NC 27708 Email: <a href="mailto:scott.huettel@duke.edu">scott.huettel@duke.edu</a> Phone: 919-681-9527</p>	<p>Ariel Kalil, Professor Harris School of Public Policy University of Chicago Suite 110 1155 East 60th Street Chicago, IL 60637 E-mail: <a href="mailto:a-kalil@uchicago.edu">a-kalil@uchicago.edu</a> Phone: 773-834-2090</p>	<p>Arie Kapteyn Senior Economist RAND Corporation 1776 Main Street P.O. Box 2138 Santa Monica, CA 90407 Email: <a href="mailto:kapteyn@rand.org">kapteyn@rand.org</a> Phone: 310-393-0411 x7973</p>
<p>Annamaria Lusardi, Professor Department of Economics Dartmouth College 301 Rockefeller Hall Hanover, NH 03755 Email: <a href="mailto:Annamaria.Lusardi@Dartmouth.edu">Annamaria.Lusardi@Dartmouth.edu</a> Phone: 603-646-2099</p>	<p>Derek Neal, Professor Department of Economics University of Chicago 1126 East 59th Street Chicago, IL 60637 Email: <a href="mailto:d-neal@uchicago.edu">d-neal@uchicago.edu</a> Phone: 773-702-8166</p>	<p>Seth Sanders, Professor Department of Economics Duke University 213H Social Sciences Building Durham, NC 27708 Email: <a href="mailto:seth.sanders@duke.edu">seth.sanders@duke.edu</a> Phone: 919-660-1800</p>
<p>Chris Taber, Professor Department of Economics University of Wisconsin 1180 Observatory Drive Madison, WI 53706-1391 Email: <a href="mailto:ctaber@ssc.wisc.edu">ctaber@ssc.wisc.edu</a> Phone: 608-263-7791</p>	<p>Bruce Western, Professor Department of Sociology Harvard University 430 William James Hall 33 Kirkland Street Cambridge, MA 02138 Email: <a href="mailto:western@wjh.harvard.edu">western@wjh.harvard.edu</a> Phone: (617) 495-3879</p>	



## 9. Payment to Respondents

The NLSY97 is a long-term study in which the same subjects are interviewed annually. For that reason, respondents in all prior rounds have been offered financial and in-kind incentives as a means of securing their long-term cooperation and arresting the decline of response rates. For Round 15 we propose to continue an incentive structure similar to that used in Rounds 13 and 14. The base incentive for the main fielding will consist of \$30 cash and an in-kind payment of average value \$10 and a maximum value of \$30. In addition, we would offer an additional incentive per missed round to those respondents returning to the survey after having missed Round 14 and possibly other prior rounds. In Round 14, respondents were offered \$15 per missed round. We propose to continue that practice in Round 15. Respondents would receive at most \$45 additional dollars for prior missed rounds. Our objective is always to keep the missed-round payment lower than the payment for a timely interview; the three rounds prior to Round 15 all offered incentives of at least \$30 per interview.

We also plan to continue administration of a noninterview respondent (NIR) questionnaire in Round 15 to sample members who have missed at least 5 consecutive rounds and who do not complete the Round 15 interview on first approach. Responding to this questionnaire will still classify sample members as noninterviews for Round 15, but it will enable us to learn more about our long-term nonrespondents and therefore help us to understand attrition patterns and any nonresponse bias. We expect about 650 respondents to be eligible for the NIR questionnaire, with about 130 individuals agreeing to complete the NIR questionnaire. Those who complete the NIR questionnaire will receive \$15 for their effort. Depending on the results from Round 14 implementation, we may alter the timing or reduce the sample size for this questionnaire in Round 15.

For the Round 15 pretest, the base incentive will remain \$50 with no in-kind incentive. As with the main fielding, we will offer \$15 per missed round to those pretest respondents who return to the survey after having missed Round 14 and possibly other prior rounds. Respondents would receive at most \$45 additional dollars for prior missed rounds.

The Round 15 pretest will include a small trial collection of birth certificates. 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 15 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 permission form 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. This trial was proposed by BLS and approved by OMB for the Round 14 pretest, but BLS decided to postpone the trial because of the collection of permission forms in Round 14 to obtain college transcripts. We plan to administer the birth certificate trial during the Round 15 pretest.

During Round 14, we are collecting permission forms to obtain postsecondary educational records (that is, college transcripts) from respondents. Permission forms are being sought from all respondents who have received a high school diploma or GED or completed coursework in a postsecondary degree program. No incentive payments are offered to respondents whose permission forms are sought by field interviewers at the time of the Round 14 in-person interview. A follow-up mail effort will take place after the close of the Round 14 data-collection period and will request return of signed permission forms from sample members completing the Round 14 interview by phone or not completing the Round 14 interview at all. Respondents who are asked to mail a signed permission form will be offered \$10 for their efforts. During Round 15 data collection, we will make a final attempt to obtain permission forms from eligible respondents who have not yet provided one. These individuals will be offered \$10 for their efforts.

Round 15 will begin with the mailing of an advance letter and locating card. The advance letter used in Round 14 is shown in attachment 6. The letter will be updated prior to the Round 15 pretest, but its content will be similar to that shown for Round 14. The mailing will also include a token gift not to exceed \$2 in value. In recent rounds, gifts have included Presidential dollar coins, reusable “eco” bags that respondents can use at the grocery store or for other purposes, and puzzle magnets. The purpose of enclosing these items is to give the envelope some heft and make it less likely that recipients of the letter will simply throw it away without opening the envelope. The items also serve as a low-cost gesture of goodwill that might encourage sample members to update their contact information or call to schedule an interview.

The table below summarizes the respondent incentives that will be offered in Round 15.

Round 14 Respondent, Completes Round 15, Provided College Transcript Permission Form in Round 14	Round 14 Respondent, Completes Round 15, Provides College Transcript Permission Form in Round 15	Missed Round 14 (or more), Completes Round 15, Provided College Transcript Permission Form in Round 14	Missed Round 14 (or more), Completes Round 15, Provides College Transcript Permission Form in Round 15	Did not complete Round 15 interview and missed at least five consecutive previous rounds	Round 15 Pretest Respondent
Advance Letter Token Gift = \$2.	Advance Letter Token Gift = \$2.	Advance Letter Token Gift = \$2.	Advance Letter Token Gift = \$2.	Advance Letter Token Gift = \$2.	Advance Letter Token Gift = \$2.
Base Incentive = \$30	Base Incentive = \$30	Base Incentive = \$30	Base Incentive = \$30		Base Incentive = \$50
In-kind gift(s): average = \$10, min = \$0, max = \$30	In-kind gift(s): average = \$10, min = \$0, max = \$30	In-kind gift(s): average = \$10, min = \$0, max = \$30	In-kind gift(s): average = \$10, min = \$0, max = \$30		
					Birth Certificate Permission Form = \$5; Scanning = \$10
	College Transcript Permission Form = \$10		College Transcript Permission Form = \$10		
		Missed Round(s) = \$15 per round to max of \$45	Missed Round(s) = \$15 per round to max of \$45		Missed Round(s) = \$15 per round to max of \$45
				Noninterview Respondent (NIR) Questionnaire = \$15	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Minimum = \$32	Minimum = \$42	Minimum = \$47	Minimum = \$57	Minimum = \$2	Minimum = \$52
Maximum = \$62	Maximum = \$72	Maximum = \$107	Maximum = \$117	Maximum = \$17	Maximum = \$112
Typical = \$42	Typical = \$52	Typical = \$57	Typical = \$67	Typical = \$2	Typical = \$62

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## 10. Confidentiality of Data

### a. BLS Confidentiality Policy

The information that NLSY97 respondents provide is protected by the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA). CIPSEA is shown in attachment 3.

CIPSEA safeguards the confidentiality of individually identifiable information acquired under a pledge of confidentiality for exclusively statistical purposes by controlling access to, and uses made of, such information. CIPSEA includes fines and penalties for any knowing and willful disclosure of individually identifiable information by an officer, employee, or agent of the BLS.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Commissioner’s Order No. 1-06, “Confidential Nature of BLS Statistical Data,” explains the Bureau’s policy on confidentiality: “In conformance with existing law and Departmental regulations, it is the policy of the BLS that respondent identifiable information collected or maintained by, or under the auspices of, the BLS for exclusively statistical purposes and under a pledge of confidentiality shall be treated in a manner that will ensure that the information will be used only for statistical purposes and will be accessible only to authorized persons.” Commissioner’s Order 1-06 is shown in attachment 4.

By signing a BLS Agent Agreement, all authorized agents employed by the BLS contractors at NORC, CHRR, and their subcontractors pledge to comply with the Privacy Act, CIPSEA, other applicable federal laws, and the BLS confidentiality policy. No interviewer or other staff member is allowed to see any case data until the BLS Agent Agreement, BLS Confidentiality Training certification, and Department of Labor Information Systems Security Awareness training certification are on file. Respondents will be provided a copy of the questions and answers shown in attachment 5 about uses of the data, confidentiality, and burden. These questions and answers will appear on the back of the letter that respondents will receive in advance of the Round 15 interviews. Attachment 6 shows the combination advance letter and locating card that we used in Round 14.

The following confidentiality pledge is given to NLS respondents:

“We want to reassure you that your confidentiality is protected by law. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002, the Privacy Act, and other applicable Federal laws, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, its employees and agents, will, to the full extent permitted by law, use the information you provide for statistical purposes only, will hold your responses in confidence, and will not disclose them in identifiable form without your informed consent. All the employees who work on the survey at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and its contractors must sign a document agreeing to protect the confidentiality of your information. In fact, only a few people have access to information about your identity because they need that information to carry out their job duties.

Some of your answers will be made available to researchers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other government agencies, universities, and private research organizations through publicly available data files. These publicly available files contain no personal identifiers, such as names, addresses, Social Security numbers, and places of work, and exclude any information about the States, counties, metropolitan areas, and other, more detailed geographic locations in which survey participants live, making it much more difficult to figure out the identities of participants. Some researchers are granted special access to data files that include geographic information, but only after those researchers go through a thorough application process at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those authorized researchers must sign a written agreement making them official agents of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and requiring them to protect the confidentiality of survey participants. Those researchers are never provided with the personal identities of participants. The National Archives and Records Administration and the General Services Administration may receive copies of survey data and materials because those agencies are responsible for storing the Nation’s historical documents.”

## **b. NORC and CHRR Confidentiality Safeguards**

NORC and CHRR have safeguards to provide for the security of NLS data and the protection of the privacy of individuals in the sampled cohorts. These measures are used for the NLSY97 as well as the other NLS cohorts. Safeguards for the security of data include:

1. Storage of printed survey documents in locked space at NORC.
2. Protection of computer files at CHRR and its subcontractors against access by unauthorized individuals and groups. Procedures include using passwords, high-level “handshakes” across the network, data encryption, and fragmentation of data resources. As an example of fragmentation, should someone intercept data files over the network and defeat the encryption of these files, the meaning of the data files cannot be extracted except by referencing certain cross-walk tables that are neither transmitted nor stored on the interviewers’ laptops. Not only are questionnaire response data encrypted, but the entire contents of interviewers’ laptops are now encrypted. Interview data are periodically removed from laptops in the field so that only information that may be needed by the interviewer is retained.
3. Protection of computer files at NORC and at CHRR against access by unauthorized persons and groups. Especially sensitive files are secured via a series of passwords to restricted users. Access to files is strictly on a need-to-know basis. Passwords change every 90 days.

Protection of the privacy of individuals is accomplished through the following steps:

1. Oral permission for the interview is obtained from all respondents, after the interviewer ensures that the respondent has been provided with a copy of the appropriate BLS confidentiality information and understands that participation is voluntary.
2. Information identifying respondents is separated from the questionnaire and placed into a nonpublic database. Respondents are then linked to data through identification numbers.
3. After the final interview round, respondent identifier computer files will be destroyed.
4. The public-use version of the data, available on the Internet, masks data that are of sufficient specificity that individuals could theoretically be identified through some set of unique characteristics.
5. Other data files, which include variables on respondents’ State, county, metropolitan statistical area, zip code, and census tract of residence and certain other characteristics, are available only to researchers who undergo a review process established by BLS and sign an agreement with BLS that establishes specific requirements to protect respondent confidentiality. These agreements require that any results or information obtained as a result of research using the NLS data will be published only in summary or statistical form so that individuals who participated in the study cannot be identified. These confidential data are not available on the Internet.
6. Questions of a more private nature are contained in self-administered portions of the survey so the respondents’ answers are concealed both from the interviewer and anyone in the household who might overhear the interview.
7. In Round 15 we will continue several training and procedural changes that were begun in Round 11 to increase protection of respondent confidentiality. These include an enhanced focus on confidentiality in training materials, clearer instructions in the Field Interviewer Manual on what field interviewers may or may not do when working cases, and the introduction of formal separation procedures when interviewers complete their project assignments. Online and telephone respondent locating activities have been moved from NORC’s geographically dispersed field managers to locating staff in NORC’s central offices. Respondent social security numbers were removed from field interviewer laptops in Round 10 and from NORC and CHRR records during Round 13.

## 11. Sensitive Questions

Continuing the practice of the last few rounds of the NLSY97, the Round 15 questionnaire includes a variety of items that permit the respondents to provide more qualitative information about themselves. Informal feedback from the interviewers and respondents indicates that this type of subjective data carries greater resonance with respondents as being informative about who they are, rather than the behavioral data that are the mainstay of the NLSY97 questionnaire. The items selected for self-description are all hypothesized in the research literature to be predictive of or correlated with labor market outcomes. In Round 15, these items include questions about the respondent's handedness (left/right dominance) and use of free time. There are several broad sets of questions in the NLSY97 data-collection instruments that may be considered sensitive. We address each of these categories separately below.

### a.) Sexual Activity

Because puberty and the initiation of sexual activity occurred for many of the sample members during the first few survey rounds, this information has been carefully collected. Results from a number of different surveys, including early rounds of the NLSY97, indicate that a significant proportion of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 report that they are sexually active. It is vital that we continue to trace the progression of sexual activity in relation to the realization of educational and occupational goals and with respect to the promotion of good health practices. The level of sexual activity and contraceptive use are important indicators of how serious young people are about reaching higher levels of educational and occupational attainment, and there should be significant congruence between anticipated life goals, sexual activity, and its associated outcomes.

The survey will continue to collect information on the number of times male respondents have made a woman pregnant, as well as information on the live births from those pregnancies. Few studies have examined the linkages between early childbearing for men and subsequent education and employment outcomes in relation to family commitments. However, there is now some research indicating a modest connection between male labor supply and how many children they have. In an age where social responsibility is a salient public issue, longitudinal collection of data on the number of children men have fathered is essential to guarantee adequate representation of their children. At a minimum, collection of information about the offspring of male respondents is necessary for linking economic outlays of child support or lack of outlays of child support with potential determinants of both men's and women's labor supply behavior. Cross-sectional estimates of childbearing data for men can underestimate the number of children ever born to males.

Questions related to dating, sexual activity, birth control, and pregnancy outcomes (including outcomes other than live births) will be asked of all respondents in a self-administered portion of the questionnaire. During administration of these questionnaire segments, respondents first will be instructed how to use the computer to enter their responses. They also will be instructed on the use of the audio headset that will allow them to hear a question read to them at the same time that the question text appears on the screen. Question response sets will also be audio as well as visual. The audio portion will help to improve response in situations where literacy or visual impairment is a problem. During self-administration, the computer screen is not visible to the interviewer and the program automatically directs the respondent through the appropriate universe of questions. Upon ending the self-administered section, the program automatically saves the data and the interview reverts back to the next interviewer-administered module; the self-administered section cannot be re-entered during the interview after the respondent exits the section by entering a password. The respondent will be reassured by the interviewer that his or her responses, once entered into the computer, are not available for retrieval by anyone who does not work on the survey. There is evidence that using an audio computer-assisted self-interview approach favorably affects data quality (O'Reilly, J.; Hubbard, M., Lessler, J., and Biemer, P., 1992; Johnston, J. and Walton, C., 1992; Kinsey, S., Thornberry, J., Carson, C., and Duffer, A., 1995; Tourangeau, R. and Smith, T., 1995). No respondent will be pressured to answer the questions, and interviewers will be instructed to accept refusals without attempting to encourage response. Previous experience indicates that respondents usually recognize the importance of these questions, and field interviewers generally have not reported difficulties with these types of questions.

b.) Anti-Social Behavior

The educational and labor force trajectory of individuals is strongly affected by their involvement in delinquent and risk-taking behaviors, criminal activity, and alcohol and drug use. There is widespread interest in collecting data on such behaviors. The challenge, of course, is to obtain accurate information on activities that are socially unacceptable or even illegal. Questions on these activities are asked in the self-administered portions of the NLSY97.

*Crime and delinquency.* The longitudinal collection of self-reported criminal behavior permits examination of the effects of these deviant behaviors on employment activity. This includes the ability to study whether there is a sustained pattern of criminal activities through the life cycle and how these patterns are related to employment difficulties. An additional area of study is the ways in which deviant behaviors may be causally associated with a disposition towards other aberrant behavior such as excessive alcohol and drug use. Use of both self-reports of behavior and of official disciplinary and court actions allows the NLSY97 to separate the effects of criminal activity that lead to an arrest or other legal action versus criminal activity that remains unpunished.

The design of the crime and delinquency module for the NLSY97 has taken great care to avoid weaknesses contained in other surveys' instruments. As a result, unlike other surveys, the NLSY97 elicits information on a wider scope of activities and experiences related to crime. This includes questions concerning the type and frequency of criminal activity as well as self-reports about convictions, time served, and income received as a result of criminal activity.

*Experiences with the correctional system.* The Round 15 questionnaire continues to ask several questions on incarceration and parole that were added in Round 12. These include finer detail on parole and probation status as well as violations of that status, questions about experiences and services received while incarcerated, and questions about experiences and behaviors since release from incarceration. The questions on experiences and services received while incarcerated will be asked of currently incarcerated respondents and those who were incarcerated and released since the last interview. Respondents who were released from incarceration since the last interview also will be asked about their experiences and behaviors since they were released. These questions appear in the self-administered section, as do all other questions pertaining to arrest and incarceration.

*Substance use.* To quote a report based on data from the 1990 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), "Patterns of tobacco, alcohol and other drug use usually are established during youth, often persist into adulthood, contribute substantially to the leading causes of mortality and morbidity, and are associated with lower educational achievement and school dropout." It is important that the NLSY97 continue to collect this information because of the potential impact of substance use on education and employment outcomes.

c.) Mental health

The literature linking mental health with various outcomes of interest to the NLSY97, including labor force participation, is fairly well-established. The Round 15 questionnaire includes questions on how many times the respondent has been treated for emotional, mental or psychiatric problems and how many times the respondent missed work or activities because of such problems in the past year.

d.) Religion

The NLSY97 has included questions about religious identification and attendance in most rounds. The Round 15 questionnaire will include questions about religious attendance. Religion and spirituality are an important part of life for a majority of Americans. Belief systems affect a wide variety of outcomes relevant to labor market participation, ranging from the type and intensity of work and career orientations, to labor force participation and other economic outcomes that influence social and economic mobility. Religious denomination and frequency of attendance at worship services also indirectly affect labor force participation through their impact on other dimensions of individual lives. In addition, the Round 15 questionnaire asks about the religious preferences of various individuals in the respondent's life, including other household members and spouses or partners. We also include a religiosity scale, which has been repeated intermittently in various rounds of the NLSY97.

e.) Income, Assets, and Program Participation

The survey asks all respondents about their income from wages, salaries, and other income received in the last calendar year. Other income is collected using a detailed list of income sources such as self-employment income, receipt of child support, interest or dividend payments, or income from rental properties. Respondents also are asked about their participation in government programs. Included are specific questions (number of spells, duration of each spell, amount of benefit, and so forth) regarding a number of government assistance programs such as Unemployment Compensation, AFDC/TANF/ADC, and food stamps.

In addition to income, respondents are periodically asked about current asset holdings. Questions include the market value of any residence or business, whether the respondent paid property taxes in the previous year, and the amount owed on motor vehicles. Other questions ask about the respondent's current checking and savings account balances, the value of various assets such as stocks or certificates of deposit, and the amount of any loans of at least \$200 that the respondent received in the last calendar year. To reduce respondent burden, the asset questions are not asked of each respondent in every round. These questions are asked in the first interview after the respondent turns 18, and the first interviews after the respondent's 20<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup> birthdays. Because asset accumulation is slow at these young ages, this periodic collection is sufficient to capture changes in asset holdings. Round 14 was the first time any respondents were asked to report their assets as of age 30. We made some revisions to the section, primarily to reduce burden and to modify the treatment of spousal/partner assets in the questionnaire. The resulting section consists almost entirely of items previously asked in the Assets-25 section of the instrument, although the time period and a few items have changed. For example, we have introduced new items on the educational debt of the respondent's spouse or partner, recognizing that such debt can have the same effect on household assets and decision-making as the respondent's own educational debt. The new spouse/partner educational debt questions are nearly identical to those previously asked about respondents' own educational debts.

Given the high fraction of household wealth associated with home ownership, the NLSY97 questionnaire collects home ownership status and (net) equity in the home from respondents each year that they are not scheduled for the full assets module. In Round 14 we added a question on present value of the home. We also ask respondents who owned a house or other dwelling previously and no longer live there about what happened to their house or dwelling. To allow for respondent-interviewer rapport to build before these potentially sensitive items are addressed, the housing value questions were moved from the (first) Household Information section to the Assets section, which occurs late in the interview. This question series also permits the respondent to report the loss of a house due to foreclosure.

The Rounds 1-13 NLSY97 questionnaires collected month-by-month participation status information for several government programs. These questions have been substantially reduced so that monthly data were no longer collected beginning with the Round 14 interview except from respondents who did not complete the Round 13 interview. The relatively low levels of participation reported did not seem to justify the respondent burden imposed by these questions. More detailed questions about receipt of income from government programs are now asked in the Income section with other sources of income.

f.) Financial Health

To get a better understanding of the financial well-being of the respondents, we continue in Round 15 questions we introduced in Round 10 about a respondent's financial condition. We ask a set of questions to measure the financial distress of the respondents in the past 12 months. In particular, we ask whether respondents have had a "payday loan" (a loan to be repaid on the next payday), whether respondents have been 60 days late in paying their mortgage or rent, and whether they have been pressured to pay bills by stores, creditors, or bill collectors. In addition, we ask respondents to pick the response that best describe their financial condition from the following list:

1. very comfortable and secure
2. able to make ends meet without much difficulty
3. occasionally have some difficulty making ends meet
4. tough to make ends meet but keeping your head above water

5. in over your head

The goal of these questions is to understand better the financial status of these youths and how this status affects and is affected by their labor market activities.

g.) Linguistic Patterns

During Round 15, we propose to record respondents as they answer open-ended questions regarding their health, use of free time, and job search. These recordings will then be reviewed and coded by linguistically trained coding staff for inclusion of relevant data items in the public-use data files. In attachment 10, we have included an extended discussion of NLSY97 items and pilot efforts leading up to our plan for recording and coding items in Round 15.

Respondents are free to refuse to answer any survey question, including the sensitive questions described above. Our experience has been that participants recognize the importance of these questions and rarely refuse to answer.

## **12. Estimation of Information Collection Burden**

The Round 15 field effort will seek to interview each respondent identified when the sample was selected in 1997. NORC will attempt to contact approximately 8,800 sample members who are not known to be deceased. BLS expects that NORC will complete interviews with approximately 7,400 of those sample members. The content of the interview will be similar to the interviews in Round 14. Based upon interview length in past rounds, we estimate the interview will require about 65 minutes. One purpose of the Round 15 pretest is to improve our estimates of the administration time for the Round 15 questionnaire.

Interview length will vary across respondents. For example, the core of the interview covers schooling and early labor market experience. Naturally, respondents vary in the number of jobs they have held, the number of schools they have attended, and their experiences at work and at school. Our aim is to be comprehensive in the data we collect, and this leads to variation in the time required for the respondent to remember and relate the necessary information to the interviewer. In addition, the audio self-administered component of the interview is, in some cases, very engaging, and the respondents sometimes take longer to complete the task than one might expect. For these reasons, the timing estimate is more accurate on average than for each individual case.

The estimated burden in Round 15 includes an allowance for attrition that takes place during the course of longitudinal surveys. To minimize the effects of attrition, NORC will seek to complete interviews with living respondents from Round 1 regardless of whether the sample member completed an interview in intervening rounds. We anticipate that an increased fraction of completed cases will be respondents who are returning to the survey after missing one or more rounds and therefore will have longer interviews than the typical respondent who has been in the survey every year.

Household burden will vary with the number of in-scope sample members present, so households with three sample members may require three hours, and so forth. Although more than 1,800 households included multiple respondents at the time of the initial interview, by Round 15 many respondents have established their own households, and very few multiple respondent households remain. We are sensitive to the fact that the interviews in households with several sample members theoretically can pose interviewing problems, but that has not been our experience in previous rounds.

During the Round 15 field period, NORC will conduct validation interviews with about 2 percent of respondents to ascertain that the interview took place as the interviewer reported and to assess the quality of the data collected. These cases will be selected purposefully, based on data and assessments by survey management that indicate a field interviewer's caseload merits further scrutiny. These validation interviews average about four minutes each and will be conducted only for the main fielding

Based on our experience of recording segments of the main interview in rounds 11 through 13 and use of these segments for data quality assurance in Round 14, respondents will be asked to provide their consent for the recording of segments of the main interview in Round 15. Recording these interviews will enable BLS to improve data quality while reducing respondent burden.



Recording segments of the main interviews can help BLS and NORC to ensure that the interviews actually took place and that the interviewers did not fabricate the data. Recording can help to ensure that interviewers are reading the questions exactly as worded and entering the responses properly. Recording also can help to identify parts of the interview that might be causing problems or misunderstanding for interviewers or respondents. Our experiences with OMB-approved interview recordings since Round 10 indicate that respondents are generally quite willing to consent to be recorded, and the quality of recordings is sufficient for meaningful data-quality assurance.

NORC interviewers in Round 15 will read the following script to ask respondents for their consent to record the main interviews.

“My computer is equipped to record this interview for quality control, training and research purposes. As always your confidentiality is protected by Federal law and the policies of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and NORC. May I continue with the recording?”

YES

NO

If the respondent objects to the recording of the interview, the interviewer will confirm to the respondent that the interview will not be recorded and then proceed with the interview.

**Table 2. Number of Respondents and Average Response Time, NLSY97 Round 15**

<b>Form</b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>Average Time per Response</b>	<b>Estimated Total Burden</b>
NLSY97 Pretest: July-August 2011	150	Annually	150	65 minutes	163 hours
Collection of birth certificates in the NLSY97 Pretest: July – August 2011	135	Once	135	1.5 minutes	3.4 hours
Main NLSY97: September 2011-May 2012	7,400	Annually	7,400	65 minutes	8,017 hours
Validation interview	147	Annually	147	4 minutes	10 hours
NIR questionnaire	130	Annually	130	10 minutes	22 hours
College Transcript Permission Form	2,500	Once	2,500	1.5 minutes	62.5 hours
<b>TOTALS*</b>	<b>7,680</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>10,462</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>8,278 hours</b>

\* The difference between the total number of respondents and the total number of responses reflects the fact that about 2,500 are expected to complete the main interview and the college transcript permission form. In addition, about 147 respondents will be interviewed twice, once in the main survey and a second time in the 4-minute validation interview. Finally, the 135 pretest respondents expected to provide birth certificates or permission forms are included among the 150 respondents expected to complete the Round 15 pretest.

### 13. Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers

Respondents for this survey will not incur any capital and start-up costs; respondents will not incur any operation and maintenance or purchase of service costs.

**14. Estimate of Cost to the Federal Government**

The total estimated cost of the Round 15 survey is \$10,600,000. This cost includes survey management, questionnaire design, instrument development, pretest and main data collection including incentive payments, cleaning and preparation of data files for users, and services to users of the data files.

**15. Change in Burden**

The burden of 8,278 hours requested for Round 15 of the NLSY97, which will be conducted during parts of fiscal years 2011 and 2012, is 39 hours lower than the burden of 8,317 hours approved for Round 14. The difference results from the smaller number of respondents asked to complete college transcript permission forms. This reduction in burden is partially offset by the slightly higher expected numbers of respondents expected to complete the main Round 15 interview and to provide birth certificates or permission forms in the Round 15 pretest.

**16. Plans and Time Schedule for Information Collection, Tabulation, and Publication**

The following is the planned schedule for the data collection for Round 15.

Questionnaire Development	September 2009 – April 2011
Respondent Materials Development	May 2011 – September 2011
Pretest Data Collection	July 2011 – August 2011
Main Data Collection	September 2011 – May 2012
Data Processing	May 2012 – October 2013
Release of Public-Use Main Data Files	August 2013
Publication of BLS News Release	January 2014

The Round 14 data collection schedule was moved slightly later in the calendar year compared with Round 13 so that we could minimize the overlap of Round 14 main fielding with the decennial census. For Round 15, we return to the earlier schedule of rounds prior to Round 14.

**17. Reasons Not to Display OMB Expiration Date**

The OMB number and expiration date will be provided in the advance letter.

**18. Exceptions to “Certificate for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions”**

We do not have any exceptions to the “Certificate for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions” statement.