

One comment was received as a result of the Federal Register notice published in 82 FR 10408, on February 10, 2017. The comment, which was e-mailed to DOL on February 12, 2017, expressed the opinion that the survey does not benefit the citizens of the country and that the information collected is collected in other government surveys.

BLS disagrees with this comment. The National Longitudinal Survey program is the only source of long-term longitudinal social science data in the federal government. Longitudinal data are essential for understanding how people change over a long period of time, and how investments and behaviors early in life affect them later in life. The NLSY79 is unique in that it collects an extensive work history that can be used to examine important, but difficult-to-answer questions about the evolution of careers in the United States. These data are among the best available to study questions about the long-term workings of the labor market such as the returns to education, the value of early career job exploration, the effects of spells of unemployment, and differences in employment and earnings by sex, race, and ethnicity, with the scope of the answers improving as the survey continues and the cohort ages.

Moreover, the topics listed above have in many cases already been studied for the original NLS cohorts and the NLSY79. Thus, several areas can be examined by comparing the new and old cohorts. For example, the extent of labor force attachment (and related labor market outcomes) among young women in the NLSY97 cohort compared with that of their counterparts in the earlier cohorts is another potential research area.

In addition, data are also available on temporary, consultant, and contract work status. In recent years this mode of work has expanded rapidly, and many have voiced concern about the impact of these employment relationships on the careers of workers. The NLSY97 can trace these relationships and measure the extent to which they lead to more stable work arrangements.

The NLSY97 permits quantification of gross changes in many aspects of the labor force status of young adults. The oversampling of blacks and Hispanics permits comparative analyses of labor force transition patterns by race and ethnicity. A wide variety of background information also permits examination of the extent to which variations in labor force behavior reflect differences in backgrounds, ethnic characteristics, and access to schooling. From a descriptive perspective, movement into and out of the labor force and between employment and unemployment, as well as movements between jobs and between full- and part-time employment can be quantified. Examination of changes in labor force and employment status in relation to changing levels of national and local unemployment permit the testing of the “discouraged worker” and the “additional worker” hypotheses and an analysis of a variety of dimensions of frictional and “disguised” unemployment. This sample has been followed through a variety of economic climates permitting a more careful examination of the extent to which these gross flows are sensitive to cyclical and regional variations in economic conditions.

Again, by contrasting the patterns of labor force dynamics of the original NLS samples of young men and women and the NLSY79 with the patterns of the NLSY97 cohort, the question of whether or not the relationships between these transitions and levels of economic activity have changed over time can be considered. Finally, one is able to examine whether or not demographic and socio-economic factors such as marriage, childbearing, and changes in family

income levels show the same association with gross labor force movement as was true for the earlier cohorts.