

Attachment A: Proposed Changes to NLSY97 Round 20

Round 20 of the NLSY97 contains two questions that we believe are unnecessarily burdensome to respondents. Each of these questions includes a list of categories for respondents to choose as potential answers. We propose to change the wording of the questions slightly so that the lists need not be read aloud to each respondent: if a respondent gives an answer that readily matches one of the categories, the interviewer would code it directly.

These questions are two of several questions capturing reasons individuals were not at work or not looking for work that were collected with the aid of showcards when the NLSY97 was collected primarily in person (Rounds 1 to 17). When the survey transitioned to telephone as its primary mode in Round 18, the program tried to collect them in a way that preserved continuity in the measures. As we implemented this transition, some of the questions (e.g., YEMP-119410D, YEMP-103400, and YEMP-103500) were translated in a way that did not require the interviewer to read the list of potential responses, but some (e.g., YEMP-58400 and YEMP-105932) were translated in a way that did require the list to be read. This variation was unintentional. The questions requiring a read-out of the potential responses have been identified by NLS interviewers as unnecessarily burdensome to the respondents.

In the ensuing collections (rounds 18 and 19), each of these questions have continued to perform similarly to the way they did before the change in mode. While tests to statistically rule out an effect of changing modes between rounds would be complicated by the fact that each round's responses are affected by their own age- and year-based effects, simple comparisons do not reveal any notable breaks in series. We do not believe that the proposed changes will alter the responses to the questions, but the mid-round change will allow us to conduct some analysis to check for an impact. When the data become available, we propose to compare responses given in the months right after the change to the responses before the change, to measure whether there is a statistically significant difference in the compositions of answers across the possible response categories.

The proposed changes are as follows:

1. ***YEMP-58400***: *Which of the following reasons best describes why you left [employer name]?*
 1. *Layoff*
 2. *Company, office, work place, or plant closed*
 3. *End of temporary or seasonal job*
 4. *Discharged or fired*
 5. *Program/Project/Job ended*
 6. *Quit for pregnancy or family reasons*
 7. *Quit to look for another job*
 8. *Quit to take another job*
 9. *Quit to devote more time to school work*
 10. *Quit to return to school*
 11. *Quit for other (SPECIFY) reasons*
 12. *Moved away from job*

13. *No transportation/ Transportation problems*
19. *Quit to start a business*
20. *Quit because respondent's ill health, disability, or medical problems*
21. *Quit because didn't like job/assignment, boss, coworkers, pay, or benefits*
22. *Retired*
23. *Job assigned through a temporary help agency/contract firm became permanent*

We propose to change the wording to “*What is the MAIN reason you left [employer name]?*”

2. *YEMP-105932: Which of the categories best describes the MAIN reason why you were NOT working [as/for] [employer name] during this period of time?*

1. *No clients / customers*
2. *Didn't have materials / equipment needed*
3. *Financial problems*
4. *Temporary or season job ended for period but later resumed*
5. *Unpaid vacation*
6. *Going to school*
7. *In the Armed Forces*
8. *Pregnancy*
9. *Had health problems*
10. *Had problems with child care*
11. *Had other personal or family reason*
13. *Did not want to work*
14. *Some other reason*

We propose to change the wording to “*What is the MAIN reason why you were NOT working [as/for] [employer name] during this period of time?*”