

# Frequently Asked Questions & Guidelines for Data Users

## The National Survey of Children in Nonparental Care, 2013

The questions and answers below provide key information about the 2013 National Survey of Children in Nonparental Care (NSCNC). A detailed report on the design and operation of the survey is forthcoming and will be released online as soon as possible. In the meantime, this document summarizes important information for data users. Please read this document carefully and completely before analyzing the data.

## BACKGROUND

### Who sponsored the 2013 NSCNC?

- The NSCNC was funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation with support from the National Center for Health Statistics.
- Additional funding to expand the sample to include children in foster care and children in Spanish-speaking households was provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

### Who conducted the NSCNC?

- CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey program under contract with NORC at the University of Chicago.

### What were the goals of the NSCNC?

- To describe the characteristics of the population of children living apart from their parents;
- To assess the health and well-being of children in nonparental care and of their caregivers;
- To assess access to and utilization of various supports and services by these children and their caregivers.

## SAMPLE DESIGN

### What was the NSCNC sample design?

- NSCNC was a follow-up survey of children identified as NSCNC-eligible during administration of the 2011-2012 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), which was a cross-sectional telephone survey of US households with children.
- NSCH sample was a complex survey design, with stratification by state and sample type (landline or cell-phone). For households with more than one child, one child was randomly selected to be the sample child.
- NSCNC-eligible children were NSCH sample children in English- or Spanish-speaking households who were living with foster parents or with no biological, adoptive or step parents in the household at NSCH interview and were under age 18 at NSCNC interview (ages 0 to 16 at NSCH interview)

### How was eligibility determined?

- During the administration of the 2011-2012 NSCH, respondents were asked about their relationship to the sample child and about the relationships of other adults in the household to the sample child. For those who reported no biological, adoptive or step parents to the child in the household, an additional question was asked about whether the child was currently living in foster care, because many relative foster parents self-identify as a relative (e.g., "grandparent") rather than "foster parent."
- Children who were living with no biological, step or adoptive parents in the household and children who were living with foster parents were eligible for the NSCNC follow-up survey.
- Children whose NSCH interview was conducted in English or Spanish were eligible for NSCNC.
- Children who were age 18 or older at recontact were ineligible for NSCNC.
- Due to the aging of the sample, children whose NSCH interview occurred in Quarter 1 of 2011 were excluded.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/slait/nsnc.htm>

## What were the major topics included in the content of the survey?

- Whether the child still lived in the same household as at the time of the NSCH survey
- If the child no longer lived in the NSCH household, circumstances related to how and when the child started and stopped living in that household (the “No Longer Nonparental Caregiver” – or NLNPCG – Module)
- Current housing and living arrangements
- Child’s contact with siblings
- Characteristics of the child’s parents
- Child’s and child’s caregiver’s interactions with child’s parents
- Financial support, including child support from the parents, foster care subsidies, other governmental assistance, and non-monetary (in-kind) support
- Caregiver preparation, long-term planning, and legal custody
- Child well-being, child care, and school
- Caregiver health, well-being, and social supports
- Child’s health insurance and caregiver’s health insurance
- Household income and program participation
- Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the child’s caregiver and caregiver’s spouse

## DATA COLLECTION

### When were the data collected?

- April 2013 through August 2013

### Who was the respondent?

- An adult in the household with knowledge of the health and health care of the sample child. Most, but not all, were the NSCH respondent. In some cases, another adult in the NSCH respondent’s household completed the NSCNC interview.
- When the child no longer lived with the NSCH respondent, the original NSCH respondent answered questions from the NLNPCG Module, an attempt to locate the child’s current caregiver was made, and when located, the child’s current caregiver answered questions from the main NSCNC interview.

### What was the average interview length?

- The average NSCNC interview length was 33 minutes, 53 seconds, and the median time was 32 minutes, 23 seconds.

### How many interviews were completed?

- There were 1,778 households with eligible children that were recontacted and screened to determine if the child still lived in the NSCH household (i.e., screened for NLNPCG status).
- Of these, 206 NLNPCG Module interviews and 1,298 final NSCNC interviews were completed.

### What was the response rate?

- The response rate is the number of completed interviews as a proportion of the number of eligible units in the sample. For NSCNC, this rate is the product of the recontact rate (70.4%) and the interview completion rate among recontacted households (74.5%), or 52.4%.
- However, the NSCH response rate was 23.0%. Thus, accounting for nonresponse to the NSCH, the overall NSCNC response rate is the product of the NSCNC response rate and the NSCH response rate, or 12.1%.
- It should be noted that the NSCH response rate of 23% does not mean that three-quarters of eligible households refused to participate in the NSCH. The NSCH response rate is low in part because of cell phone numbers that ring with no answer and for whom eligibility cannot be determined. The NSCH cooperation rate among eligible households, or interview completion rate, was 51.4%.

### **Were incentives to participate used?**

- To improve the likelihood that households with eligible children would participate in the survey, incentives were offered. All eligible households were offered \$10 to complete the survey. Cases that had refused to complete the interview twice were offered an additional \$5 to complete the interview. The maximum total value offered to any household was \$15. Of those offered the additional \$5, 17.6% completed the interview.

### **What was the potential impact of nonresponse bias on survey estimates?**

Although incentive efforts did improve the response rate, there remained much nonresponse to the survey, especially when including nonresponse to the NSCH. NSCH sampling weights were adjusted to account for nonresponse. An extensive analysis of nonresponse bias in the NSCH (which will be detailed in the forthcoming NSCH Design and Operation report) was conducted to examine the extent to which nonresponse bias affected survey estimates and the extent to which nonresponse adjustment to the sampling weights corrected for such bias. Multiple methods were used to estimate bias. The results indicate that the interviewed population was more likely to live in rural and other areas with lower household density when compared with the nonresponding population. The interviewed population was also more likely to live in areas associated with higher levels of home ownership, lower home values, and a greater percentage of non-Hispanic white persons. In general, the analysis showed that response biases could have had a small impact on key survey estimates, but the nonresponse adjustment to the weights substantially reduced the potential magnitude of those biases. Of the key survey estimates examined, the maximum estimated bias when using the nonresponse-adjusted weights was 1.14 percentage points. In each case, the maximum estimated bias was within the 95% confidence interval for the “biased” estimate, indicating that nonresponse bias in the NSCH was consistently smaller than potential sampling error. Bias estimates were so small that, for most of the key survey variables examined, changing the method used to estimate bias changed the estimated direction of the bias.

Analysis of additional nonresponse bias resulting from nonresponse to the NSCNC is not yet complete at the time of this document’s release and will be detailed in the forthcoming NSCNC Design and Operation report. Because NSCNC respondents and nonrespondents alike had completed the NSCH, there are more data on the NSCNC nonrespondents than are usually available for survey nonrespondents, enabling both a powerful ability to analyze nonresponse bias and a powerful ability to adjust the weights to account for nonresponse. As a result of these weighting adjustments, the overall response rate for NSCH itself could be considered the more accurate indicator of potential nonresponse bias in NSCNC.

### **What languages in addition to English were used to conduct the interviews?**

- The NSCH questionnaire was professionally translated into Spanish.
- During data collection, 9 detailed interviews were completed by a Spanish-language interviewer.

## **DATA FILES**

### **How many data files are included in the release?**

- Two files are included in the public release: the NLNPGC Screener File and the NSCNC Interview File.
- The NLNPGC Screener file contains records for all 1,778 children whose households were recontacted and for whom their status (still living with the NSCH caregiver or not) was ascertained. This file can be used to estimate the prevalence of children in nonparental care remaining in that care 1-2 years later, and can be stratified by demographic variables from the NSCH that have been appended to the data records: age, sex and race/ethnicity of the child and household income relative to poverty level.
- The NSCNC Interview file contains records for the 1,298 children whose current caregivers completed the NSCNC interview, and contains data from the full interview, less certain variables that were suppressed, coarsened or perturbed in order to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

### **What other data are available?**

- An additional file, the NLNPCG Module file, contains records for the 206 children who no longer lived with the NSCH caregiver and whose NSCH caregiver completed the NLNPCG Module. It contains data from the NLNPCG Module questions, plus the demographic variables from the NSCH that were appended to the NLNPCG Screener file. This file can be used to analyze characteristics of entry into and exit from nonparental care. Because of the very small sample size and resulting limited analytic utility of this file, it is being made available only under a data use agreement upon request (contact [slaits@cdc.gov](mailto:slaits@cdc.gov) if you would like to request this file).
- It is also possible to conduct analysis of linked NSCH/NSCNC data. Because the NSCH was designed as a state-level file and includes state identifier on the public data file, while NSCNC was designed as a national file that is not representative at the state level, it is not possible to link the public NSCH and public NSCNC files together. Analysts interested in using the linked data should apply to the NCHS Research Data Center for access to nonpublic data. Please see the procedures at: <http://www.cdc.gov/rdc/>.

## **SAMPLING WEIGHTS**

### **How were the data weighted?**

Separate weight variables were produced for analysis of each NSCNC data file. The weighting scheme began with a base sampling weight, which was the NSCH final weight. Adjustments to the base sampling weight included the following steps and calculations:

- Adjustment for households that could not be recontacted;
- Adjustment for incomplete residency-eligibility screening;
- Raking adjustment of residency-eligibility screener weights;
- Adjustment for nonresponse to the NLNPCG Module (NLNPCG cases only);
- Poststratification adjustment of NLNPCG Module weights (NLNPCG cases only);
- Adjustment for incomplete age-eligibility screening;
- Adjustment for age-ineligible children who were 16 years old at NSCH (roughly half of 16-year-olds had aged out of the NSCNC age range by recontact; the remaining children were weighted up to account for those who had become ineligible);
- Adjustment for nonresponse to the NSCNC interview;
- Trimming of extreme weights; and
- Raking adjustment of child weights.

### **What was the source of population control totals for raking the weights?**

- 2011-2012 National Survey of Children's Health. For a description of the derivation of the NSCH weights, please see the NSCH 2011-2012 FAQ at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/slaits/nsch.htm>.

### **What is the weight variable to use in analysis?**

- For analysis of the NLNPCG Screener File, use RES\_SCR\_WT
- For analysis of the NSCNC Interview File, use FINAL\_WT

## **ESTIMATION AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

### **From what population was the sample drawn?**

- The population was all noninstitutionalized children in the US who were aged 0-16 years and living in English- or Spanish-speaking households with no parents present (except foster parents) in 2011-2012.
- NSCNC is the first large-scale, population-based national sample of children in nonparental care that includes survey content directly relevant to this population.

### **Are special programs needed to analyze these data?**

- Yes. For proper variance estimation, your program must be able to incorporate the complex sample design structure. Examples include SUDAAN, Stata, SPSS Complex Samples module, WesVar, the SAS SURVEY procedures, and the base program R with the separate SURVEY package.

### **What variables should be used to estimate variance?**

- Stratum identifiers: COL\_STRATA;
- Primary sampling unit (PSU) variable (unique household identifier): NSCNCHH\_S for the Screener file or NLNPGC Module file and NSCNCHH\_I for the Interview file.

### **Can the data be subsetted before analysis?**

- The procedure of keeping only select records and list-wise deleting other records is called subsetting the data. Most software packages that analyze complex survey data will incorrectly compute standard errors for subsetted data, because subsetting the data can delete important design information needed for variance estimation. Analysts should not subset the data. Analysts interested in examining specific population subgroups (such as children living in poverty) should use the appropriate options in their software package (e.g., SUBPOPN in SUDAAN).

## **GUIDELINES FOR DATA USE**

The Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (44 USC 3501 note) and the Public Health Service Act (42 USC 242m Section 308d) provide that data collected by NCHS may be used only for the purpose of health statistical reporting and analysis. Any effort to determine the identity of any reported case is prohibited by these laws. NCHS takes extraordinary measures to assure that the identity of survey subjects cannot be disclosed. All direct identifiers, as well as characteristics that might lead to identification, have been omitted from the data set. Any intentional identification or disclosure of a person or establishment violates the assurances of confidentiality given to the providers of the information. Therefore, users must:

- Use the data in this data set for statistical reporting and analysis only;
- Make no use of the identity of any person discovered, inadvertently or otherwise, and advise the Director, NCHS, of any such discovery (301-458-4500);
- Not link this data set with individually identifiable data from any other NCHS or non-NCHS data sets.

Use of the data set signifies users' agreement to comply with the above-stated statutory-based requirements.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **Whom do I contact if I have questions about the NSCNC after I read this document?**

- We know this summary may not provide all the information that analysts need on the survey design and operation. If you have further questions, please send an email to [slaits@cdc.gov](mailto:slaits@cdc.gov).

### **What is the suggested citation for this document?**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, State and Local Area Integrated Telephone Survey. National Survey of Children in Nonparental Care: Frequently Asked Questions & Guidelines for Data Users. April 2014. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/slaits/nscnc.htm>.