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Module title: Introduction to the NHES 2016 Data Collection and the Adult Training and Education Survey

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This module will highlight important differences between the 2016 and 2012 NHES data collections. It will also describe the 2016 NHES data collection and the Adult Training and Education Survey (or ATES), which is a new addition to the NHES.

To best understand how to use the 2016 NHES data, users are encouraged to first review the five other NHES training modules available through the Distance Learning Dataset Training System. Those modules provide greater detail on the general features of the NHES program.

This module updates the existing information for the 2016 data collection, where the 2016 collection differs from the 2012 collection. Note that throughout this module, blue underlined screen text indicates clickable links to additional resources.

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The 2016 NHES administration follows the general conventions of the 2012 NHES administration. However, several key distinctions are worth noting.

First, two surveys, the Early Childhood Program Participation Survey (or ECPP) and the Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey (or PFI), were administered in both 2012 and 2016.

The 2016 NHES also included the new Adult Training and Education Survey (or ATES). Details about ATES are provided later in this module.

Second, the sampling frame was constructed slightly differently for the 2016 administration. In 2016, but not in 2012, the sampling frame was sorted using a Census tract-level poverty indicator. In addition, in 2012, all post office boxes were sampled, while in 2016 post office boxes were included in the sample only if the post office box was the only way a household could receive mail.

Third, the 2012 and 2016 samples also differed in size. Because of the addition of ATES, the household sample for the 2016 NHES was much larger than the 2012 NHES, with a starting sample of 206,000 households, compared to 160,000 in 2012.

The fourth difference between the two data collections was the method (or mode) by which the surveys were administered. The 2012 administration was conducted exclusively by mail. The 2016 administration was conducted primarily by mail, but it included a web-based administration to a random subset of households.

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The 2016 NHES was conducted from January to August 2016. The sample included 171,000 households that received surveys by mail, and 35,000 households that were asked to complete the surveys online. The 2016 administration included three topical surveys, the Early Childhood Program Participation Survey, the Parent and Family Involvement Survey, and the Adult Training and Education Survey. Households were administered one of the three topical surveys based on their screener survey responses. Copies of the survey instruments are available on the NHES web page.

With the exception of slide 12, which discusses the NHES 2016 Data File Users' Manual, the rest of this module focuses on the ATES instrument and sample.

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The ATES is a major innovation in the 2016 NHES. Prior to this data collection, there were no detailed national data to describe adults' attainment of industry-recognized credentials, other than educational credentials such as diplomas and degrees. Data were also lacking on the formal work-based programs that adults often use to attain work skills.

The ATES was added to the NHES data collection in order to fill these gaps. It is designed to provide policymakers and researchers with information on the full complement of adults' formal, work-related skills development and credentialing.

Specifically, the ATES collects data on three key topics: certifications and licenses, postsecondary educational certificates, and work experience programs such as internships and apprenticeships. Data collected on certifications and licenses include the field of the credential, such as health care or education, how the skills needed to attain the credential were acquired, the perceived usefulness of the credential, and whether the credential is related to the adult's current job.

Data on post-secondary educational certificates include the certificate's field of study and its perceived usefulness. Finally, data on work experience programs include the occupational area the program is in; various program characteristics, such as whether it was a paid or unpaid position, and how long the program lasted; and the program's perceived usefulness. The ATES also collects information on the adult's background characteristics, such as educational attainment, labor force status, occupation, earnings, and various demographic characteristics.

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As part of the NHES program, the ATES replaces previous NHES surveys on adult education that were administered between 1991 and 2005. Users should note that the ATES survey is different from these prior surveys in both content and target population, so the data from the older surveys and the new survey cannot be compared. ATES marks the beginning of a new time series in the NHES program.

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The ATES target population is adults who are 16 to 65 years old, no longer in kindergarten through grade 12, and who live at a residential address in the 50 United States or the District of Columbia. The ATES excludes adults who live in dormitories, military barracks, psychiatric hospitals, prisons, or other institutions.

The unit of analysis for the ATES is the sampled adult. The 2016 ATES administration yielded data on 47,744 adults.

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Because the ATES uses a complex sample design and not a simple random sample, the use of weights for analysis is critical to ensure that the data accurately describe the sampled population. Specifically, estimates must be generated using sampling weights, and standard errors must be calculated using procedures designed for complex samples. The ATES data file contains the variables needed to generate the appropriate estimates and standard errors.

The ATES file includes a final sampling weight variable, FAWT, to be used for calculating estimates such as means and percentages. The file includes variables for calculating standard errors using either the jackknife 1 replication method or the Taylor-series linearization method. For the jackknife replication method, the file includes replicate weights FAWT1 through FAWT80. For the Taylor-series linearization method, the file contains the primary sampling unit variable APSU and the strata variable ASTRATUM.

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This table displays key characteristics of the ATES sample, based on unweighted analyses, and of the ATES population, based on weighted analyses. Note that the unweighted and weighted estimates often differ. These differences illustrate the importance of weighting the data in order to produce accurate population estimates.

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In all NHES surveys, including the ATES, data are imputed for all variables except in four situations. Specifically, data are not imputed for “other specify” text strings, for the race of adults who report that they are Hispanic, for appended non-questionnaire data, such as sampling frame variables, and for legitimately skipped questions.

In addition to these exceptions, ATES data were not imputed for the field of reported certifications and licenses, or for occupation or industry fields.

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The ATES provides a wealth of information on adults who have certifications, licenses, and postsecondary educational certificates and on adults who have completed work experience programs. To provide a sense of the types of information available, this slide lists some of the initial findings from ATES concerning work experience programs. First, the ATES revealed that, as of 2016, 21 percent of adults had completed a work experience program. These programs differ in their characteristics.

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As a result, only 11 percent of adults had completed a paid work experience program, and only 6 percent had completed a program that lasted one year or more. The ATES also showed that the most prevalent fields for work experience programs were health care and teaching, and that women were more likely to have completed a work experience program than were men. Finally, the ATES also found that two-thirds of adults rated their work experience program as “very useful” for improving their work skills.

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As noted in the module “Getting Started with the NHES Data,” users can access the ATES data through public-use or restricted-use data files. The public-use file excludes some variables that are on the restricted-use file.

One set of excluded variables are those that might risk disclosing respondents’ identities. The public-use file also excludes respondents’ write-in responses. Some analysts might be particularly interested in data that are only available on the restricted-use file. With the restricted-use file, users can recode and analyze write-in responses. For example, analysts could recode respondents’ certification and licensure field, rather than using the derived variable for certification and licensure field. The restricted-use file also contains more detailed geographic information than is available on the public-use file.

While the public-use data file is available on the NHES website, users who are interested in restricted-use files should apply for a restricted-use license.

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In addition to this set of NHES training modules, more detailed information on all aspects of the 2016 NHES data collection can be found in the study’s online Data File User’s Manual. This manual provides comprehensive, detailed documentation on all aspects of the 2016 NHES administration, including sampling, data collection and processing, response rate analyses, weighting and standard error calculations, and data anomalies that could affect some analyses.

The Users’ Manual also includes a guide to the data file layout and copies of the data collection instruments.

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This module has highlighted important differences between the 2016 and 2012 NHES data collections. It has also described the 2016 NHES data collection and the Adult Training and Education Survey.

Important resources that have been provided throughout this module are summarized on this slide for your reference.

You may now click the “Exit” button to return to the landing page.