

DESCRIPTION OF NCHS-SSA LINKAGE

NCHS has conducted a linkage of its population based surveys with the Social Security Administration (SSA). The linked survey files create an analytic tool for evaluation of the needs of the elderly and other persons with disabilities. These files provide the data needed to formulate and answer vital research questions by identifying the characteristics of Social Security disability applicants and recipients.

SSA administrative data are available for those NCHS respondents who were willing to provide personal identification data to NCHS and for whom NCHS was able to validate and match with Social Security Administrative records. The Social Security Administration provided NCHS with benefit history data from 1962 through December 2007.

The NCHS health surveys were linked to five SSA Administrative Data Files: the Master Beneficiary Record ([MBR](#)) file, the Supplemental Security Record file ([SSR](#)), the Payment History Update System ([PHUS](#)) file, the 831 Disability Master File ([831](#)) and a special extract of summarized quarters of coverage ([QOC](#)) from the Master Earnings File. The MBR is the main file for administering the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) program, also known as Title II, and contains the data needed to generate Social Security Benefit checks. The SSR is the main file for administering the Supplemental Security Income (SSI), also known as Title XVI, and maintains information on all persons who have ever applied for and or received benefits for the Title XVI program. The PHUS file maintains historical payment data needed to determine when a person actually received payments and the amount of payment actually given. The 831 Disability file contains the initial disability decision rendered by the Disability Determination Services (DDSs) for individuals applying for disability benefits under Title II (OASDI) and/or Title XVI (SSI). Due to Internal Revenue Service regulations, NCHS was only able to extract a small set of summarized annual quarters of coverage variables from the Master Earnings File. These summarized variables describe an individuals' "insured status" based on their earnings history and can be found in the Quarters of Coverage file made specifically for this NCHS linkage. A more detailed description of these files and the variables contained in each file can be found in the [NCHS-SSA data codebook](#).

To maximize the use of the linked SSA data, NCHS has also created public use NCHS SSA Feasibility Study data files that can be downloaded directly from the website: ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health_Statistics/NCHS/datalinkage/feasibility_study_data. The feasibility files provide a limited set of variables that can be used to determine the maximum available sample size so that the feasibility of conducting analyses utilizing the linked SSA data can be assessed. It is important to note that the SSA Feasibility Study Files do not provide any information pertaining to benefits or payments; they simply contain record status variables and record counts to assist researchers who are considering whether or not to initiate a RDC proposal.

Special Note: Social Security data in these records are extracted from files designed for program administration, and not for research. They are inherently not "user friendly" and are easy to misunderstand. To a great extent that is because the programs are far more complicated than they appear initially. Users are urged to review the documentation carefully and to consult basic program information. Much is available at www.ssa.gov; in particular, see Social Security Program Rules at www.ssa.gov/regulations/index.htm. In addition, see the Rand Corporation's SSA Program Data User's Manual (Panis et al., 2000) and the Social Security Bulletin's Annual Statistical Supplement¹.

¹ Panis, Constantijn; Euler, Ronald; Grant, Cynthia; Bradley, Melissa; Peterson, Christin E.; Hirscher, Randall; and Paul Steinberg. 2000. SSA Program Data User's Manual. Rand Corporation Contract PM-973-SSA.