

**Dataset Title:** National Survey of American Life (NSAL)

**Overview:** The National Survey of American Life (NSAL) asks African-American and African-Caribbean individuals in the United States questions about their neighborhood, religion, family, friends, family history, and mental health. It compares the presence and severity of mental disorders in African-American and non-Hispanic white populations. It focuses on the nature of race and ethnicity for African-Americans. The NSAL is a component of the Collaborative Psychiatric Epidemiology Surveys (CPES). Its goal is to be of use in the development of sound policy by describing the circumstances of American-American individuals in the U.S.

**Date:** 2001-2003

**Time dimension:** Cross-Sectional

**Sample:** The researchers used national multi-stage probability methods to create sampling populations. National multi-stage probability methods were also used to match interviewers to survey respondents. Interviews were based in towns and cities where there were significant numbers of Black Americans. Extensive information on sampling design, including unique screening and listing procedures, interview training, and survey response rates, can be found at [deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/34224/1/177\\_ftp.pdf](http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/34224/1/177_ftp.pdf)

**Data source:** Data was collected from two-hour face-to-face interviews with 3,570 African-Americans, 1,623 Afro-Caribbean individuals, and 891 non-Hispanic whites. All respondents were 18 years or older. Researchers used the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) IV World Mental Health Composite Interview (WHO-CIDI) to determine risk factors and health services of various mental illnesses.

There was a separate, but similar, questionnaire for adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17. 1,170 adolescents completed this questionnaire. One parent or guardian filled out a different paper questionnaire about the adolescent during this interview.

677 adult respondents were re-interviewed with the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV (SCID) and mental health severity scales to compare the diagnoses with those given by the DSM-IV World Mental Health CIDI (WMH-CIDI). This part of the NSAL will allow researchers to determine the nature of CIDI diagnoses in different racial and ethnic groups.

## Self-Identified Race and Hispanic Origin Measures:

Now, I would like to ask you some general questions about racial issues.

### **NSBA I**

G1. People use different words to refer to people whose original ancestors came from Africa. What word best describes what you like to be called?

*Use this coding scheme:*

- |                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 - Black            | 7 - Nigga                  |
| 2 - Black American   | 8 - West Indian            |
| 3 - Negro            | 9 - Haitian                |
| 4 - African-American | 10 - Jamaican              |
| 5 - Afro-American    | 97 - Other (SPECIFY) _____ |
| 6 - Colored          |                            |

H20. In addition to being American, what do you think of as your ethnic background or origins? (ENTER ALL MENTIONS)

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NONE, DK, OR REFUSED GO TO H24**

H22. Which do you feel best describes your ethnic background or origins? \_\_\_\_\_

H23a\_cb. Can you please tell me what is your ancestry or country of origin? (FIRST OR ONLY MENTION) (**LOOK-UP LIST FOR CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES**)

H24b. Which one best describes your race?

- 1 - Black or African American
- 2 - White
- 3 - American Indian or Alaska Native
- 4 - Asian
- 5 - Pacific Islander
- 7 - Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 - Don't Know
- 8 - Refused **GO TO H27**

## Observed Race Measures:

**\*FH36. INTERVIEWER CHECKPOINT: (SEE RESPONDENT'S RACE)**

RESPONDENT IS WHITE..... 1 **GO TO \*F1, SECTION F**  
ALL OTHERS..... 2

H19. INTERVIEWER CHECKPOINT (REFER TO SAMPLE R BELONGS TO)

- ☐ 1. R IS WHITE OR BLACK **GO TO H20**
- ☐ 2. R IS CARIBBEAN **GO TO H23a\_cb**

**Reflected Race Measures: N/A**

## Phenotype Measures:

### *Shade of Skin Color - DAS '95*

- G7. (RB, PG 31) Compared to most Black people, what shade of skin color do you have? Would you say very dark brown, dark brown, medium brown, light brown or very light brown?
- 1 - Very dark brown
  - 2 - Dark brown
  - 3 - Medium brown
  - 4 - Light brown
  - 5 - Very light brown
- G9. (RB, PG 31) Compared to most Black people, what shade of skin color does your spouse/partner have? (Would you say very dark brown, dark brown, medium brown, light brown or very light brown?)
- 1 - Very dark brown
  - 2 - Dark brown
  - 3 - Medium brown
  - 4 - Light brown
  - 5 - Very light brown

## Race or Ethnic origin of Respondent's Parents:

- H25. (RB, PG 40) Which do you feel best describes your biological Father's racial background? (Black or African American, White, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Pacific Islander?)
- 1 - Black or African American
  - 2 - White
  - 3 - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 - Asian
  - 5 - Pacific Islander
  - 7 - Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 9 - Don't Know
  - 8 - Refused **GO TO H27**
- H26. (RB, PG 40) Which do you feel best describes your biological Mother's racial background? (Black or African American, White, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Pacific Islander?)
- 1 - Black or African American
  - 2 - White
  - 3 - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 - Asian
  - 5 - Pacific Islander
  - 7 - Other (SPECIFY) \_\_\_\_\_

H27. In what state or country was...	STATE	COUNTRY
a) ...your biological father born?		
b) ...your father's mother (your grandmother) born?		
c) ...your father's father (your grandfather) born?		
d) ...your biological mother born?		
e) ...your mother's mother (your grandmother) born?		
f) ...your mother's father (your grandfather) born?		

**Interviewer Characteristics:** N/A

**Other Race Measures:**

G2. Which would you say is more important to you -- being (RESPONSE IN G1 IF EQUALS '1' TO '10'; "Black" ALL OTHERS) or being American, or are both equally important to you?

1 - ("BLACK" or G1 RESPONSE)  
2 - American  
3 - Both equally  
4 - (IF VOL): Neither; just a person/human being  
7 - Other (SPECIFY): \_\_\_\_\_

**Collected by:**

University of Michigan Survey Research Center

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**Weblinks:**

<http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/prba/nsal>

[deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/34224/1/177\\_ftp.pdf](http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/34224/1/177_ftp.pdf)

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/00190>

**Citation:**

Jackson, J. S., Torres, M., Caldwell, C. H., Neighbors, H. W., Nesse, R. M., Taylor, R. J., Trierweiler, S. J., et al. (2004). The National Survey of American Life: A Study of Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Influences on Mental Disorders and Mental Health. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, 13(4), 196-207.

**Website citation:**

*The National Survey of American Life*. University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, n.d. Web. <<http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/prba/nsal#investigators>>.

**Publications using NSAL data:**

<http://www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/prba/nsalpubs.html>