



What are the National Longitudinal Surveys?

The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) are a set of surveys sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) of the U.S. Department of Labor. The NLS has gathered information at multiple points in time on the labor market experiences and other significant life events of several groups of men and women.

NLS data collection and user services are provided, under contract, by CHRR at The Ohio State University and NORC at the University of Chicago. Funding for the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult survey is provided by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

NLS cohort topics include:

Demographic and family background, education, military experiences, job characteristics and training, labor market status and histories, marital and family characteristics, income and assets, transfers of time and money, retirement, geographic location and mobility, health, nutrition, and physical activity, fertility and parenting, sexual activity, attitudes and expectations, behaviors and perspectives, environmental characteristics, and civic engagement.

Additionally, NLSY79 Child and Young Adult surveys include:

Assessments of the quality of the home environment, cognitive development, temperament, and motor, social and emotional development.

How do I obtain NLS data?

National Longitudinal Surveys data are made available to researchers through the Investigator website at: nlsinfo.org/investigator. Investigator allows users to search for variables of interest for any NLS cohort, create simple tabulations of the data, extract data sets for analysis, and access documentation. NLS public data are immediately available and free of charge.

Where do I get more information?

Visit the NLS website at: nlsinfo.org for online access to questionnaires and other documentation, a searchable, annotated bibliography of NLS research, news releases, updates, information on obtaining restricted-access data, such as geocoded files, and much more.

Questions about NLS data should be directed to NLS User Services: usersvc@chrr.osu.edu or **614-442-7366**.

Questions about BLS publications and restricted-access NLS data should be directed to: NLS_info@bls.gov or **202-691-7410**

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New Questions in the
NLSY79 and
NLSY79 Young Adult
Surveys

National Longitudinal Surveys



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About the Cohorts

1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth

(NLSY79): Began in 1979 with 12,686 men and women born in 1957-64 (ages 14-22 in 1979). Sample members were interviewed annually from 1979-1994 and biennially thereafter. Oversamples of military and economically disadvantaged, non-black/non-Hispanic respondents were dropped in 1985 and 1991, leaving a sample size of 9,964. The 2016 interview (round 27) was conducted with 6,912 men and women ages 51-60. Round 28 is currently underway and the data release should fall in late 2020/early 2021, depending on the end of fielding.

NLSY79 Child and Young Adult (CYA): Began in 1986 with children born to female NLSY79 respondents. Biennial data collection consists of interviews with the mothers and interviews with the children themselves; from 1994 to 2014, children turning age 15 and older during the survey year were administered a Young Adult questionnaire that is similar to the NLSY79 questionnaire.

Beginning in 2016 (round 27), the Child survey is no longer conducted and the Young Adult sample includes all respondents age 12 and older. The 2016 interview was conducted with 5,352 young adults ages 12-44. To date, about 10,500 children have been interviewed in at least one survey round. Round 27 data was released in February 2019. Round 28 is currently underway and the data release should fall in late 2020/early 2021, depending on the end of fielding.

What new questions are included in the NLSY79?

Round 27. Because the detailed assets module was included in round 27 (2016), limited time was available for new survey questions. A set of questions on job tasks is described in the separate “New NLSY Employment Data” brochure. Female

respondents were asked questions about the onset of menopause, including the respondent’s age at her last menstrual cycle, whether she has had a hysterectomy, and whether she is taking hormone replacement therapy.

Round 28. Round 28 includes new items in the areas of employment, retirement expectations, income, and health to support the study of retirement decisions. New questions on characteristics of the respondents’ jobs are described in the separate “New NLSY Employment Data” brochure. The remaining new questions are described below.

Retirement

- **Social Security and Pensions:** these questions ask whether, at what age, and how much per month the respondent expects to collect in Social Security retirement benefits. Similar questions are asked for employer-based pensions. Additionally, several questions on knowledge of Social Security benefits assess respondents’ understanding of when they can start claiming benefits and how benefit amounts might be affected by the timing of a claim.
- **Retirement Assets:** respondents report the value of Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), the estimated value of other assets for retirement, and whether respondent expects support from family members.
- Spouse/partner’s expected sources of retirement income.

Income

- Income amounts are recorded separately for the respondent and spouse/partner for several key sources, including Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, IRAs, annuities and pensions.

- Separate questions on disability payments have been added, rather than bundling these payments with other sources of income.
- Respondents report whether they can borrow \$3000 from family and friends if a need arises.

Health

- **Memory:** round 28 re-asks two questions from the age 48 cognition module, in which respondents rate their memory on a 5-point scale and compare their memory to two years ago.
- **Pain:** respondents report whether they experience chronic pain and, if so, how often. Round 28 also includes three new questions about the use of prescription or over-the-counter pain medication in the last 30 days.
- **Age 60 Health Module:** similar to the Age 40 and Age 50 health modules, this module is asked of respondents who have reached age 60. It will be included in the survey for the next 4 rounds with respondents only answering the questions in their first interview after turning age 60. Most questions in the module match those asked in the NLSY79 Age 40 and Age 50 Health modules.

The Age 60 health module contains some new additions that attempt to collect more information about emotional health. They include: Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), Denier life satisfaction scale, and the GAD 7-item scale for Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Also, questions on the diagnosis of anxiety and of sleep disorders have been added to the list of chronic conditions.

- **Spouse’s Health:** Two new questions ask the respondent to rate their spouse’s physical and emotional health.

What new questions are included in the CYA?

Round 27. This was the first round without a separate child survey; all child respondents age 12 and older were instead included in the young adult interview. Because of this change, several questions from the child self-administered survey were added to the young adult survey. These items include the Self-Perception Profile for Children and child ‘moods’ items, as well as perceived neighborhood safety and best/youngest age for having a child. The round 27 Young Adult survey also included new questions on desiring more friends, electronic cigarettes, opioids/narcotics, and synthetic marijuana.

Round 28. The latest Young Adult survey includes new questions to expand understanding of physical and mental/emotional health and well-being.

- **Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation:** several questions ask about different aspects of the respondent’s sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **Loneliness, Social Isolation/ Connectedness:** several questions have been added to measure the number of and frequency of interactions with friends, family, and neighbors to assess perceived practical support, actual support, and reciprocity.
- **Anxiety:** the GAD 7-item scale for Generalized Anxiety Disorder has been added as an expansion of questions on emotional health; this scale is also available for NLSY79 mothers in the Age 60 health module.
- **Mother’s Health:** Young Adult respondents answer four questions about their perceptions of their NLSY79 mothers’ health and well-being.