

The National Longitudinal Surveys

Sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 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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NLS OVERVIEW

National Longitudinal Surveys



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. These surveys have gathered information at multiple points in time on the labor market experiences and other significant life events of several groups of men and women. Each of the NLS samples consists of several thousand individuals, many of whom have been surveyed over several decades.

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 Cohort (NLSY97)

Screening for the NLSY97 was conducted in 1997, and the initial interview occurred soon after. The original sample included oversamples of blacks and Hispanics. All age-eligible residents of a screened household were included, so the sample includes a large number of sibling groups and other relatives.

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 Cohort (NLSY79)

Screening for the NLSY79 was conducted in 1978, and the initial interview took place in 1979. The original sample included oversamples of blacks, Hispanics, and economically disadvantaged non-black/non-Hispanics, as well as a special sample of respondents in the military. Most of the military sample was dropped after the 1984 survey (201 respondents were retained) and the economically disadvantaged non-black/non-Hispanic sample was dropped after the 1990 survey. All age-eligible residents of a screened household were included, so the sample includes some spouse pairs and a large number of sibling groups and other relatives.

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 Child and Young Adult Cohort (CYA)

Began in 1986 with children born to female NLSY79 respondents. Biennial data collection consists of a battery of cognitive, socioemotional and physiological assessments, interviews with the mothers, and interviews with the children themselves. From 1994 onward, children turning age 15 and older during the survey year have been administered a Young Adult questionnaire that is similar to the NLSY79 questionnaire. In 2016, interviewed NLSY79 mothers completed the Mother Supplement for children in the household at least part-time who were 0 to 13 years of age as of the end of 2016,

and children 12 and older were included in the Young Adult data collection. To date, about 10,500 children have been interviewed in at least one survey round.

Original Cohorts

The first four NLS cohorts (Older Men, Mature Women, Young Men, and Young Women) began in the mid-1960s. Screening was conducted in early 1966 by the Census Bureau. Each cohort includes an oversample of blacks. All residents of a screened household who were eligible for one of the cohorts were included, so the cohorts taken together include many spouse, parent-child, and sibling groups.

Cohort	Birth Years	First Interview (Age at Interview)	Number of Interviews (through 2019)	Original Sample Size	Status
NLSY97	1980-1984	1997-98 (12-17)	18	8,984	Continuing biennially
NLSY79	1957-1964	1979 (14-22)	28	12,686 (9,964 remain eligible)	Continuing biennially
NLSY79 Child	Birth-14	1986	16	(Varies)	Ended in 2014
NLSY79 Young Adult	15 and older*	1994	13	(Varies)	Continuing biennially
Older Men	4/1/1906-3/31/1921	1966 (45-59)	13	5,020	Ended in 1990
Mature Women	4/1/1922-3/31/1937	1967 (30-44)	21	5,083	Ended in 2003
Young Men	4/1/1941-3/31/1952	1966 (14-24)	12	5,225	Ended in 1981
Young Women	1943-1953	1968 (14-24)	22	5,159	Ended in 2003

* Beginning in 2016, the NLSY79 Young Adult includes all respondents age 12 and older.