

## 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](https://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](https://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](mailto: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](mailto:NLS_info@bls.gov) or **202-691-7410**.

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# Using the NLS to Study SUBSTANCE USE

# National Longitudinal Surveys



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## 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 seven cohorts of men and women.

## Which NLS cohorts have substance use data?

Detailed data on the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco are available for all three ongoing NLS cohorts. Limited data on alcohol and tobacco use are available for three of the four original NLS cohorts (for which data collection has ended). The fourth original cohort, Young Men, provides no information on substance use.

### 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97):

Began in 1997 with 8,984 men and women born in 1980-84 (ages 12-17 in 1997). Sample members were interviewed annually from 1997 to 2011 and biennially thereafter. The 2017 interview was conducted with 6,734 men and women ages 32-38.

### 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 2018 interview was conducted with 6,878 men and women ages 53-62.

**NLSY79 Child and Young Adult (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.

**Older Men (OM):** Began in 1966 with 5,020 men born in 1906-21 (ages 45-59 in 1966). Sample members were interviewed 13 times: in 1966-69, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1983 and 1990. The final interview in 1990 was conducted with 2,092 respondents who were 69-83 years old, and 2,206 family members of deceased respondents.

**Mature Women (MW):** Began in 1967 with 5,083 women born in 1922-37 (ages 30-44 in 1967). Sample members were interviewed 21 times from 1967-2003. The final interview in 2003 was conducted with 2,237 women ages 66-80.

**Young Women (YW):** Began in 1968 with 5,159 women born in 1943-53 (ages 14-24 in 1968). Sample members were interviewed 22 times from 1968-2003. The final interview in 2003 was conducted with 2,857 women ages 49-59.

## Which NLS data are relevant to substance use research?

The following substance use topics have been covered in varying detail for the cohorts listed.

- Quantity and frequency of alcohol use at various points in time
- Quantity and frequency of cigarette use at various points in time
- Age when first smoked cigarettes
- Age at first alcohol use (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Attending school or work under the influence of alcohol (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)

- Driving under the influence of alcohol (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Arrests related to alcohol use (NLSY97)
- Perceptions of the health effects of alcohol (NLSY97)
- Effects of alcohol use on health, behavior, and relationships (NLSY79, CYA)
- Family history of alcohol use and experiences living with alcoholics (NLSY79, CYA)
- Alcohol use among peers (CYA)
- Alcohol use during pregnancy (NLSY79, CYA)
- Age when quit smoking (OM, MW, YW)
- Peer pressure to smoke cigarettes (CYA)
- Exposure to second-hand smoke (CYA)
- Cigarette use during pregnancy (NLSY79, CYA)
- Quantity and frequency of illegal drug use (including marijuana, hashish, cocaine, amphetamines, heroin, prescription drugs) at various points in time (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Age at first use of illegal drugs (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Attending school or work under the influence of drugs (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Drug use during military service (NLSY79)
- Experience selling illegal drugs (NLSY79, NLSY97)
- Effects of drug use on health, behavior, and relationships (CYA)
- Drug use among peers (CYA, NLSY97)
- Drug use during pregnancy (CYA, NLSY79)

