

## 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.

#### NLS Director

**Keenan Dworak-Fisher (BLS)**  
[dworak-fisher.keenan@bls.gov](mailto:dworak-fisher.keenan@bls.gov)

**NLS Principal Investigator, NLSY79:**  
**Deborah Carr (CHRR)**  
[carrds@bu.edu](mailto:carrds@bu.edu)

**NLS Principal Investigator, NLSY79 CHILD/YA:**  
**Elizabeth Cooksey (CHRR)**  
[elizabeth.cooksey@chrr.osu.edu](mailto:elizabeth.cooksey@chrr.osu.edu)

**NLS Principal Investigator, NLSY97:**  
**Lowell Taylor (NORC)**  
[lt20@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:lt20@andrew.cmu.edu)

# Using the NLS to Study DISABILITIES

# 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. 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 disability data?

Disability data are available for all three ongoing NLS cohorts as part of the health questionnaires. Health information was also collected for all four original NLS cohorts (for which data collection has ended) that can be useful in researching mental and physical conditions within the older cohorts.

### 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 2021 interview was conducted with 6,713 men and women ages 36-42. In addition, a COVID-19 Supplement was fielded in 2021.

In rounds 6, 11, 12, and 13 of the NLSY97, an extensive series of health questions inquired about physical, genetic, mental, and emotional conditions respondents may have had and the extent to which such conditions limit current activities. Additionally, the NLSY97 contains health modules for Health-At-Age-29, Health-At-Age-38/39, and in round 19, respondents answered a short series of questions about chronic pain.

### 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 2022 interview was conducted with 6,413 men and women ages 57-66.

The NLSY79 contains several health modules that ask questions related to mental and physical disabilities. Those modules include: cognition, depression scale (CES-D), 40+ Health, 50+ Health, and 60+ Health. The latter health modules contain variables for physical and mental component summary scores (SF-12).

### 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, more than 10,000 children have been interviewed in at least one survey round.

The NLSY79 mothers report child assessments about temperament, motor and social skills, and behavioral problems. In the Young Adult questionnaire, respondents report mental and physical health limitations as well as if they are providing care for someone with disabilities.

**Older Men (OM):** Began in 1966 with 5,020 men born in 1906-21 (ages 45-59 in 1966). Sample members were interviewed 12 times from 1966 to 1983. A 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 Men (YM):** Began in 1966 with 5,225 men born in 1941-51 (ages 14-24 in 1966). Sample

members were interviewed 12 times from 1966 to 1981.

**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 2,859 women ages 49-59.

## Which NLS data are relevant to disability research?

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

- Mental health, including the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale in all cohorts but the Young Men, the Affect Balance Scale in the Older Men and Mature Women, and the Mental Health Inventory in the NLSY97
- Disability income, benefits
- Ability to work
- Accidents and injuries, including work-related injuries and illnesses
- Occurrence of physical, genetic, mental, or emotional conditions, age when started and extent of condition (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Ability to attend school (CYA, NLSY97)
- Military-related disability (CYA, NLSY97)
- Head injuries (NLSY79, CYA)
- Special medical equipment for condition (OM)
- If child has physical, mental, or emotional conditions, age of occurrence (CYA, NLSY97)
- Treatment, medicine, or special equipment for child's condition (CYA)
- Cognition, learning disability (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Visits to mental health professional (CYA, NLSY97)
- Child behavior and temperament, child motor and social skills (CYA)
- Remedial/special ed participation (CYA, NLSY97)
- Ability to complete routine tasks without assistance, unable to perform physical activities such as walking, using stairs, stooping or crouching (OM, MW, YM, YW)