

## 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 EDUCATION

# 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 education data?

Education data are available for all three ongoing NLS cohorts and two of the original cohorts (for whom data collection has ended). These five cohorts also had special data collections of information from respondents' schools and/or transcripts.

### 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. NLSY97 school surveys are available on a restricted basis; visit [www.bls.gov/nls](http://www.bls.gov/nls) for details about requesting access.

### 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.

**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 2,857 women ages 49-59.

Basic information about highest grade completed, diplomas/degrees received, type of high school curriculum, and some years attended college is available for the two oldest cohorts, Older Men and Mature Women.

**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.

## Which NLS data are relevant to education research?

Information on highest grade attended/completed and highest degree received is available for all cohorts. More education related data have been covered in varying detail in the five youngest cohorts.

**Primary/Secondary:** Current enrollment status/date of last enrollment; reason stopped attending

high school; school public/private; high school curriculum; GED received; suspensions/expulsions/grades repeated/skipped, remedial coursework; number of schools attended; math courses taken in high school; extracurricular activities; school attendance.

**College:** Current enrollment status/dates of enrollment/field of study; college tuition and financial aid/loans received; IPEDS codes for colleges attended and applied to—available on geocode CD only; college is 2-year or 4-year; college attendance, dates/terms enrolled, credits taken, GPA, field of study, and remedial math/English courses taken.

**Attitudes and Expectations:** Level of education desired and expected; whether respondent expects to earn high school diploma by age 20 and college degree by age 30; parent and student levels of satisfaction with school; parent involvement with school; school environment/safety; and high school subjects enjoyed most/least.

### Achievement/Aptitude Scores:

**NLSY97:** Scores on SAT/ACT self-reported and recorded from high school transcripts; PIAT Math test given during several interviews to respondents in grade 9 or lower as of round 1; ASVAB administered to respondents and summary score included in data set.

**NLSY79:** Scores on a variety of tests including SAT/ACT collected from high school transcripts; ASVAB administered to respondents and summary score included in data set.

**CYA:** Through age 14, repeated assessments given during interview including PIAT Math, PIAT Reading, PPVT, and Memory for Digit Span.

**YM and YW:** Test scores on a range of tests including California Test of Maturity and Otis/Beta/Gamma recorded in school survey; survey staff created a composite "IQ Score" combining the results of these tests into a single variable.