

Longitudinal Data for Research on Child Development

The NLSY79 Child/Young Adult surveys provide researchers with the opportunity to study the effects of family transitions on child development across the lifespan. The NLSY79 Child/YA data can be used to investigate the connections between economic or employment instability, changes in family structure, or residential mobility on a variety of cognitive, educational, socio-emotional, health, and behavioral outcomes from childhood through adolescence into adulthood.

NLSY79 Mothers

NLSY79 Mothers are a subset of the NLSY79, a nationally representative longitudinal survey of 12,686 men and women who were age 14-21 in 1979. As of 2018, there are over 4,900 NLSY79 mothers.

The design and content of the NLSY79 enable users to study the social, economic, and demographic experiences of the respondents and their families over a more than 30-year period.

NLSY79 Children

Biological children of NLSY79 Mothers; surveyed biennially starting in 1986. In 2016, the Child survey is no longer conducted; however, 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.

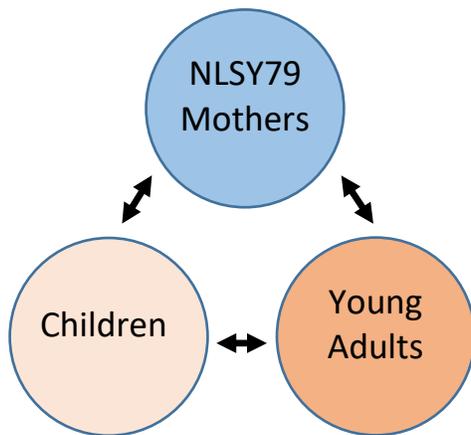
Surveys use mother interviews, direct assessments, and self-report of topics such as:

- Cognition (memory, reading, math)
- Health, illness, and injuries
- Socio-emotional development
- Behavior problems
- Schooling and after-school activities
- Attitudes and expectations
- Risk-taking
- Substance use and smoking
- Religion and volunteering
- Parent/child interactions
- Friendships/dating
- Home environment

Young Adults

- Starting at age 15, NLSY79 children are given an in-depth [Young Adult questionnaire](#) more suited to their life stage. Ages 15-30 are interviewed biennially (1994 – present), ages 31+ are interviewed every 4 years. Additionally, beginning in 2016, children 12 and older are included in the Young Adult data collection. Information about the sample design is located at: <https://www.nlsinfo.org/content/cohorts/nlsy79-children/intro-to-the-sample/sample-design>.
- Topics include education, training, employment, health, dating, fertility and parenting, marriage and cohabitation, household composition, parent-child conflict, sexual activity, delinquent or criminal activities, substance use, computer use, pro-social behavior, political attitudes, and their expectations for the future.

Intergenerational Linkages. The NLSY79 Child-Young Adult files can be combined with information from the complete longitudinal record of their mothers, by merging with extracts from the NLSY79 main Youth.



The NLSY79 main Youth file contains histories of employment, education, income, training, work attitudes, aspirations, health, marriage, fertility, household composition, and residence. Information is also available on childhood adversity, substance use, illegal activities, aptitude, and social-psychological scales such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem, the Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control, women's roles, the Pearlin Mastery, and the CES-D depression scale.

The NLSY79 Child and Young Adult dataset contains information about the child's mother, including: family background, household composition, quarterly maternal work histories before and after each child's date of birth, educational background of household members, and prenatal care. Information on childcare experiences during the first three years of life are available for all children of a least one year of age.

Geographic & Contextual Data. Geocode files are available for all survey years for the NLSY79 main youth, which can be merged with the NLSY79 Child and Young Adult dataset. Researchers can connect the children and young adults, over time, with community characteristics such as population size, birth/death and marriage/divorce rates, median family income, poverty levels, educational attainment levels, crime rates, and school characteristics.

Research & Policy Applications. NLSY79 Child & Young Adult data have been used in more than 2,000 papers and publications. Topics include:

Attitudes Transmission
Childcare
Cognitive Impacts and Outcomes
Community Service
Early Sexuality and Childbearing

Educational Attainment
Family Structure
Health Trajectories
Home Environment
Maternal Employment
Non-Normative Behavior
Parenting

Poverty and Welfare
School Performance
School to Work Transitions
Socio-Emotional Development
Transmission of Behaviors
Volunteering and Voting

The National Longitudinal Surveys are sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) with data collection and user services provided, under contract, by CHRR at The Ohio State University and NORC at the University of Chicago. Funding for the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult surveys is provided by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). For information on NLS data or documentation visit www.nlsinfo.org or contact NLS User Services (usersvc@chrr.osu.edu or 614-442-7366).

NLS data and documentation are publicly available for search and download at: <http://www.nlsinfo.org>

The annotated, searchable NLS bibliography can be accessed at: <http://www.nlsbibliography.org>