

# Obesity Data in the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult Surveys

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.

**Birthweight and growth during childhood.** The height and weight of children in the NLSY79 surveys have been recorded in every round of the NLSY79 child survey. Mothers also report each child's birthweight, whether the child was breastfed, when the child first began eating solid food, and whether he or she experienced serious feeding problems during the first year of life. The child file includes a series of questions, for younger children, about the degree to which the child is allowed choice in breakfast and lunch foods, how often the child eats with both parents, and whether the child eats what he or she is told. Children aged 10 and older report on television viewing habits, the amount of time spent playing video games, and whether they engage in sports or a physical activity after school.

**When were the children measured?** In the child interviews conducted from 1986 to 2014, the child's height and body weight were measured by the interviewer or recorded as reported by the mother. Mother reports of child height and weight are also available in 2016 and 2018.

**How were the children measured?** The method of report, tape measure, scale, mother, or child, was also recorded. Starting in 2006, children also self-reported their weight in the Child Self-Administered Supplement when they reached age 10-14.

**Body weight, nutrition, sleep and self-image in young adulthood.** NLSY79 children who have reached young adult age (15 years and older through 2014; 12 and older beginning in 2016) are asked their height and weight in each survey round. Starting in 2004, young adult respondents have provided information on possible factors in obesity, such as their vegetable and fruit consumption, exercise, computer and video game usage, and amount of sleep. Young adults report any eating disorder when asked if they have received psychological treatment in the past year. Questions about self-perception of weight and what respondents plan to do about their weight (also found in the NLSY97) were introduced into the survey beginning in 2006. Young adult mothers report about weight gain or loss during pregnancy, as well as the birth weight and length of their children. Beginning in 2010, male respondents are also asked about the birth weight of their children. Starting in 2010, all young adult parents are asked the current height and weight of their children with whom they have contact.

**Mothers' weight history.** NLSY79 respondents first reported their weight in 1981 and then in the majority of the subsequent survey rounds, including the latest round. Height was first reported in 1981 and then in several later rounds, in a variety of formats, including the latest round. In recent years, respondents are asked whether they are trying to lose weight, gain weight, or maintain the same weight (also asked of the Young Adult children). Female respondents with children have given information on their weight before pregnancy and their weight at the time of delivery. Recent survey years also include information on NLSY79 respondents' reported activity level and behavior related to nutrition.

## A sampler of recent research on obesity from the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult

Altschul, Drew M., Christina Wraw, Catharine R. Gale and Ian J. Deary. "How Youth Cognitive and Sociodemographic Factors Relate to the Development of Overweight and Obesity in the UK and the USA: A Prospective Cross-cohort Study of the National Child Development Study and National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1979." *Epidemiology* 9,12 (November 2019): DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2019-033011. (NLSY79)

Alvarado, Steven Elias. "The Indelible Weight of Place: Childhood Neighborhood Disadvantage, Timing of Exposure, and Obesity across Adulthood." *Health and Place* 58 (July 2019): DOI: 10.1016/j.healthplace.2019.102159. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Courtemanche, Charles, Rusty Tchernis and Xilin Zhou. "Maternal Work Hours and Childhood Obesity: Evidence Using Instrumental Variables Related to Sibling School Eligibility." *Journal of Human Capital* 13,4 (Winter 2019): 553-584. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Dasgupta, Kabir and Keisha T. Solomon. "Family Size Effects on Childhood Obesity: Evidence on the Quantity-Quality Trade-off Using the NLSY." *Economics and Human Biology* 29 (May 2018): 42-55. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Dasgupta, Kabir, Keshar M. Ghimire and Gail Pacheco. "How Heavy Is the Price of Smoking? Estimating the Effects of Prenatal Smoking on Child Weight Outcomes." *Applied Economics* published online (27 February 2022): DOI: 10.1080/00036846.2022.2041178. (NLSY79 Child)

Huang, Wei, Elaine M. Liu and C. Andrew Zuppann. "Relative Obesity and the Formation of Non-cognitive Abilities During Adolescence." *Journal of Human Resources* published online (10 November 2020): DOI: 10.3368/jhr.58.2.1018-9812R2. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Jo, Young. "Does the Earned Income Tax Credit Increase Children's Weight? The Impact of Policy-driven Income on Childhood Obesity." *Health Economics* 27, 7 (July 2018): 1089-1102. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child)

Jones, Antwan. "Parental Socioeconomic Instability and Child Obesity." *Biodemography and Social Biology* 64, 1 (May 2018): 15-29. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Luecke, Ellen, Alison K. Cohen, Miranda Brillante, David Rehkopf, Jeremy R. Coyle, C. Emily Hendrick and Barbara Abrams. "Similarities in Maternal Weight and Birth Weight Across Pregnancies and Across Sisters." *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 23,2 (February 2019): 138-147. (NLSY79)

Patil, Divya, Daniel A. Enquobahrie, Trevor Peckham, Noah Seixas and Anjum Hajat. "Retrospective Cohort Study of the Association between Maternal Employment Precarity and Infant Low Birth Weight in Women in the USA." *Epidemiology* 10,1 (January 2020): DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2019-029584. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child)

Vartanian, Thomas P. and Linda Houser. "The Interactive Role of SNAP Participation and Residential Neighborhood in Childhood Obesity." *Journal of Children and Poverty* published online (24 September 2020): DOI: 10.1080/10796126.2020.1826246. (NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Wraw, Christina, Ian J. Deary, Geoff Der and Catharine R. Gale. "Maternal and Offspring Intelligence in Relation to BMI across Childhood and Adolescence." *International Journal of Obesity* 42 (2018): 1610-1620. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Zhang, Weihui and Tse-Chuan Yang. "Maternal Smoking and Infant Low Birth Weight: Exploring the Biological Mechanism through the Mother's Pre-pregnancy Weight Status." *Population Research and Policy Review* published online (12 October 2019): DOI: 10.1007/s11113-019-09554-x. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child)

Zhang, Zhe, Corinne Reczek and Cynthia G. Colen. "Intergenerational Coresidence and Mothers' Body Weight at Midlife." *Population Research and Policy Review* published online (20 January 2020): DOI: 10.1007/s11113-020-09567-x. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult)

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

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