

Obesity Data in the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult Surveys

The NLSY79 Child/Young Adult surveys provide researchers with the opportunity to study obesity from birth to adulthood. The Child data, and the related information on maternal and family history from the mother's longitudinal record, can be used to investigate the connections between body weight, maternal characteristics, childhood experiences, and a variety of cognitive, educational, socio-emotional, health, or behavioral outcomes from childhood through adolescence into adulthood.

All NLSY data can be accessed free of charge at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator.

Birthweight & 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 are the children measured? At the time of each child interview, the child's height and body weight are measured by the interviewer or recorded as reported by the mother.

How are the children measured? The method of report, tape measure, scale, mother, or child, is also recorded. Starting in 2006, children also self-report their weight when they reach 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 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:

Alvarado, Steven Elias. "Neighborhood Disadvantage and Obesity across Childhood and Adolescence: Evidence from the NLSY Children and Young Adults Cohort." *Social Science Research* 57 (May 2016): 80-98.

Averett, Susan L. and Erin K. Fletcher. "Prepregnancy Obesity and Birth Outcomes." *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 20, 3 (March 2016): 655-664.

Classen, Timothy J. "Changes Over Time in the Relationship of Obesity to Education Accumulation." *Eastern Economic Journal* 43, 3 (June 2017): 496-519.

Colen, Cynthia G. and David Ramey. "Is Breast Truly Best? Estimating the Effects of Breastfeeding on Long-term Child Health and Wellbeing in the United States Using Sibling Comparisons." *Social Science and Medicine* 109 (May 2014): 55-65.

Deardorff, Julianna, Barbara Abrams, J. Paul Ekwaru and David Rehkopf. "Socioeconomic Status and Age at Menarche: An Examination of Multiple Indicators in an Ethnically Diverse Cohort." *Annals of Epidemiology* 24,10 (October 2014): 727-733.

Dhar, Paramita and Christina Robinson. "Physical Activity and Childhood Obesity." *Applied Economics Letters* 23,8 (May 2016): 584-587.

Guettabi, Mouhcine and Abdul Munasib. "Urban Sprawl, Obesogenic Environment, and Child Weight." *Journal of Regional Science* 54,3 (June 2014): 378-401.

Hernandez, Daphne C. and Emily Pressler. "Accumulation of Childhood Poverty on Young Adult Overweight or Obese Status: Race/Ethnicity and Gender Disparities." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 68,5 (May 2014): 478-484.

Huang, David Y.C., H. Isabella Lanza and M. Douglas Anglin. "Trajectory of Adolescent Obesity: Exploring the Impact of Prenatal to Childhood Experiences." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 23,6 (August 2014): 1090-1101.

Lanza, H. Isabella and David Y.C. Huang. "Is Obesity Associated With School Dropout? Key Developmental and Ethnic Differences." *Journal of School Health* 85,10 (October 2015): 663-670.

Leonard, Stephanie, Lucia C. Petito, David Rehkopf, Lorrene Ritchie, and Barbara Abrams. "Maternal History of Child Abuse and Obesity Risk in Offspring: Mediation by Weight in Pregnancy." *Childhood Obesity* 13, 4 (August 2017): 259-266.

Rendall, Michael S., Margaret M. Weden, Christopher Lau, Peter B. Brownell, Zafar Nazarov and Meenakshi Fernandes. "Evaluation of Bias in Estimates of Early Childhood Obesity From Parent-Reported Heights and Weights." *American Journal of Public Health* 104,7 (July 2014): 1255-1262.

Robinson, Camille, Alison K. Cohen, David Rehkopf, Julianna Deardorff, Lorrene Ritchie, Ruvani T. Jayaweera, Jeremy R. Coyle and Barbara Abrams. "Pregnancy and Post-delivery Maternal Weight Changes and Overweight in Preschool Children." *Preventive Medicine* 60 (March 2014): 77-82.

Sobol-Goldberg, Shira and Jonathan Rabinowitz. "Association of Childhood and Teen School Performance and Obesity in Young Adulthood in the US National Longitudinal Survey of Youth." *Preventive Medicine* 89 (August 2016): 57-63.

For more NLS research, access the annotated, searchable NLS bibliography at: www.nlsbibliography.org

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 the Center for Human Resource Research (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).