

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. 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 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 or **614-442-7366**.

Questions about BLS publications and restricted-access NLS data should be directed to: NLS_info@bls.gov or **202-691-7410**.

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NLSY79 Fact Sheet

National Longitudinal Surveys



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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. These surveys have gathered information at multiple points in time on the labor market experiences and other significant life events of several groups of men and women. Each of the NLS samples consists of several thousand individuals, many of whom have been surveyed over several decades.

What is the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79)?

The NLSY79 is a sample of 12,686 men and women born during the years 1957 through 1964 and living in the United States when the survey began. Survey respondents were ages 14 to 22 when first interviewed in 1979. The U.S. Department of Labor selected the NLSY79 cohort to replicate the NLS of Young Women and the NLS of Young Men, which began in the 1960s. The NLSY79 also was designed to help researchers and policymakers evaluate the expanded employment and training programs for youths legislated by the 1977 amendments to the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

Data are available for this cohort through 2020 when the 6,535 men and women in the sample were ages 55 to 64. Data from the 2022-2023 survey will be released in late 2024/early 2025. To supplement the main data collection, survey staff conducted special high school and transcript surveys. NLSY79 respondents also participated in a special administration of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, and the resulting AFQT scores are available for most sample members.

How was the sample designed?

The sample is constructed to allow researchers to analyze the experiences of both the population as a whole and also of Hispanics, blacks, and economically disadvantaged non-black/non-Hispanics. (The supplemental sample of economically disadvantaged non-black/non-Hispanics was discontinued after 1990.) A sample of youths serving in the Armed Forces also was included in the early years of the survey, although this supplemental sample was discontinued after 1984. Because the sample design selected all household residents in the appropriate age range, some households included more than one NLSY79 respondent. The most common relationship in multiple-respondent households is those of spouses and siblings; some spouse pairs are present.

Cohorts in the National Longitudinal Surveys

NLSY97: women and men ages 12-16 as of December 31, 1996

NLSY79: women and men ages 14-21 as of December 31, 1978

NLSY79 Child and Young Adult: children born to women of the NLSY79

NLS of Older Men: men ages 45-59 in 1966 (discontinued after 1990)

NLS of Young Men: men ages 14-24 in 1966 (discontinued after 1981)

NLS of Mature Women: women ages 30-44 in 1967 (discontinued after 2003)

NLS of Young Women: women ages 14-24 in 1968 (discontinued after 2003)

Sample sizes by race for selected surveys: NLSY79

	1979	1984	1990	1994	2000	2004	2010	2016	2018	2020
Total	12,686	12,069	10,436	8,891	8,033	7,661	7,565	6,912	6,878	6,535
non-Black, non-Hispanic	7,510	7,124	5,988	4,468	4,061	3,932	3,762	3,407	3,303	3,159
Black, non-Hispanic	3,174	3,048	2,719	2,700	2,438	2,345	2,358	2,191	2,169	2,050
Hispanic or Latino	2,002	1,897	1,729	1,723	1,534	1,464	1,445	1,314	1,342	1,268

Note: After the 1984 survey, 1,079 members of the military oversample were dropped from the survey (201 were retained). After the 1990 survey, the 1,643 members of the economically disadvantaged, non-Black/non-Hispanic oversample were dropped from the survey. These dropped samples play a large role in the declines between 1984-1990 and 1990-1994 in the table. In 2018, survey staff interviewed about 77 percent of respondents in the remaining sample types not known to be deceased.