



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 several groups of men and women.

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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New Questions in the NLSY79 and NLSY79 Young Adult Surveys

National Longitudinal Surveys



About the Cohorts

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. Data are available for this cohort through 2020 (round 29) 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.

NLSY79 Child and Young Adult (CYA): Began in 1986 with children born to female NLSY79 respondents. Biennial data collection consists of interviews with the mothers and interviews with the children themselves; from 1994 to 2014, children turning age 15 and older during the survey year were administered a Young Adult questionnaire that is similar to the NLSY79 questionnaire.

Beginning in 2016, the Child survey is no longer conducted and the Young Adult sample includes all respondents age 12 and older. The 2020 interview (round 29) was conducted with 4,354 young adults ages 12-46. To date, more than 10,000 children have been interviewed in at least one survey round. The current public use data release contains the complete set of 1986-2018 Child files and the 1994-2020 Young Adult files.

What new in the NLSY79 and the CYA?

NLSY79 rounds 28/29 include new questions related to retirement expectations, income, health, and COVID-19. CYA rounds 28/29 include new questions to expand the understanding of physical and mental/emotional health and well-being along with questions about COVID-19.

Retirement

- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Social Security and Pensions:** these questions ask whether, at what age, and how much per month the respondent expects to collect in Social Security retirement benefits. Similar questions are asked for employer-based pensions. Additionally, several questions on knowledge of Social Security benefits assess respondents' understanding of when they can start claiming benefits and how benefit amounts might be affected by the timing of a claim.
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Retirement Assets:** respondents report the value of Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), the estimated value of other assets for retirement, and whether respondent expects support from family members.
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Spouse/partner's expected sources of retirement income.**

Income

- **[NLSY79 Rd 29] Assets Module:** this module has been fielded every other round since 2000 and gives respondents the opportunity to answer approximately 20 questions about a variety of asset and debt holdings.
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Income amounts are recorded separately for the respondent and spouse/partner for several key sources, including Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, IRAs, annuities and pensions.**
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Separate questions on disability payments have been added, rather than bundling these payments with other sources of income.**
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Respondents report whether they can borrow \$3000 from family and friends if a need arises.**

Health

- **[NLSY79 Rd 29] National Death Index Data:** Public release data include the death status of respondents indicating NDI status or lack thereof. Restricted-use geocode variables include cause, year, and region of death

as listed on the death certificate. Restricted-use zip code variables include date, state, and country of death as listed on the death certificate.

- **[NLSY79 Rd 28/29] Memory:** round 28 re-asks two questions from the age 48 cognition module, in which respondents rate their memory on a 5-point scale and compare their memory to two years ago. In round 29, the cognition module is repeated for all respondents along with questions about dates and names as part of a mental status factor.
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28/29] Age 60 Health Module:** similar to the Age 40 and Age 50 health modules, this module is asked of respondents who have reached age 60. Most questions in the module match those asked in the NLSY79 Age 40 and Age 50 health modules. In round 28, the Age 60 health module contains some new additions that attempt to collect more information about emotional health. They include: Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), Denier life satisfaction scale, and the GAD 7-item scale for Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Also, questions on the diagnosis of anxiety and of sleep disorders have been added to the list of chronic conditions. In round 29, the module includes new questions about sleep apnea.
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Chronic Pain:** respondents report whether they experience chronic pain and, if so, how often. Round 28 also includes three new questions about the use of prescription or over-the-counter pain medication in the last 30 days.
- **[NLSY79 Rd 28] Spouse's Health:** Two new questions ask the respondent to rate their spouse's physical and emotional health.
- **[CYA Rd 28] Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation:** several questions ask about different aspects of the respondent's sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **[CYA Rd 28] Loneliness, Social Isolation/ Connectedness:** several questions have

been added to measure the number of and frequency of interactions with friends, family, and neighbors to assess perceived practical support, actual support, and reciprocity.

- **[CYA Rd 28] Anxiety:** the GAD 7-item scale for Generalized Anxiety Disorder has been added as an expansion of questions on emotional health; this scale is also available for NLSY79 mothers in the Age 60 health module.
- **[CYA Rd 28] Mother's Health:** Young Adult respondents answer four questions about their perceptions of their NLSY79 mothers' health and well-being.

COVID-19

- **[NLSY79, CYA Rd 29] Employment:** several questions ask about the Coronavirus outbreak in relation to respondents' employment. These questions include whether they experienced job changes, if work hours were reduced/increased, if earnings decreased/increased, and if they could only work from home.
- **[NLSY79, CYA Rd 29] Infection:** respondents report if they were diagnosed with the Coronavirus or if they suspect they had been infected by the virus.
- **[CYA Rd 29] Health:** respondents report if they delayed or were unable to get routine health care or prescription drugs and whether anyone in the household was disabled or chronically ill.
- **[NLSY79, CYA Rd 29] Income:** respondents report if they or their spouses/partners received Coronavirus stimulus payments.
- **[CYA Rd 29] Schooling and Closures:** respondents report if children in their household were out of school for an extended period of time, and how much of an impact school closures had on respondents' physical/mental health and finances.