



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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The original cohorts, which have since been discontinued, are the Older Men, Mature Women, Young Men, and Young Women. Survey respondents were first interviewed when the NLS program began in the mid-1960s. The original cohorts share a variety of topics, including:

- Characteristics of jobs
- Labor market status
- Education
- Health and physical condition
- Marital and family characteristics
- Income and assets
- Attitudes and perspectives
- Environmental characteristics

National Longitudinal Survey of Older Men

The NLS of Older Men is a sample of 5,020 men who were ages 45 to 59 in 1966. The U.S. Department of Labor selected the Older Men cohort to enable research on the employment patterns of men who were nearing the completions of their careers, making decisions about the timing and extent of their labor force withdrawal, and

planning for retirement. Data are available for this cohort from 1966 through 1983. Further information was collected in 1990 during final interviews with the remaining respondents and 2,206 widows or other family members of deceased sample members. Additional survey topics for the NLS of Older Men include retirement and military service.

National Longitudinal Survey of Mature Women

The NLS of Mature Women is a sample of 5,083 women who were ages 30 to 44 in 1967. The U.S. Department of Labor selected the Mature Women cohort to enable research on the employment patterns of women who were reentering the workforce and balancing the roles of homemaker, mother, and labor force participant. Data are available for this cohort from 1967 through 2003, when the survey was discontinued.

The survey also has included questions on topics specific to the life stage of respondents, such as childcare issues in the earlier years of the survey and health, pension, and retirement information in later interviews. The most recent addition to the Mature Women questionnaire asked about transfers of time and money between respondents, their parents, and their children.

National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men

The NLS of Young Men is a sample of 5,225 men who were ages 14 to 24 in 1966. The

U.S. Department of Labor selected the Young Men cohort to enable research on the employment patterns of men who were completing school and entering the workforce or joining the military and were thus making initial career and job decisions that would impact their employment in the coming decades. Data are available for this cohort from 1966 through 1981, when the survey was discontinued. A special survey of the high schools of young men respondents provides additional information about their educational experiences. Additional survey topics for the NLS of Young Men include military service and job training.

National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women

The NLS of Young Women is a sample of 5,159 women who were ages 14 to 24 in 1968. The U.S. Department of Labor selected the Young Women cohort to enable research on the employment patterns of women who were finishing school, making initial career decisions, and starting families. Data are available for this cohort from 1968 through 2003, when the survey was discontinued. A special survey of the high schools of young women respondents provides additional information about their educational experiences.

The survey also has included questions on topics specific to the life stage of respondents, such as educational experiences and plans in the earlier years of the survey, childcare issues and fertility expectations a few years

later, and health, pension, and retirement information in later interviews. The most recent addition to the Young Women questionnaire asked about transfers of time and money between respondents, their parents, and their children.

Sample Design of the Original Cohorts

The U.S. Census Bureau, which conducted the surveys, designed the samples of the four original NLS cohorts so that any given household could include multiple respondents from the same cohort or from different cohorts. Variables present in the data files identify the respondents who lived in a multiple-respondent household at the time the samples were selected. These relationships offer unique samples for a number of research topics.

For example, data collected from husband-wife pairs in the NLS of Older Men and the NLS of Mature Women allow researchers to examine retirement as a family decision. Data collected from mother-daughter pairs in the NLS of Mature Women and the NLS of Young Women allow researchers to examine transfers of time and money from the perspective of both the mothers and the daughters. Father-son pairs in the NLS of Older Men and the NLS of Young Men allow researchers to examine the relationship between educational levels, self-employment, asset accumulation, and inheritance across generations.

Sample Sizes by Race - NLS of Older Men			
Survey Year	Total	non-Black	Black
1966 Initial Survey	5,020	3,600	1,420
1990 Final Survey*	2,092	1,603	489

Sample Sizes by Race - NLS of Mature Women			
Survey Year	Total	non-Black	Black
1967 Initial Survey	5,083	3,693	1,390
2003 Final Survey	2,237	1,693	544

Sample Sizes by Race - NLS of Young Men			
Survey Year	Total	non-Black	Black
1966 Initial Survey	5,225	3,787	1,438
1981 Final Survey	3,098	2,622	776

Sample Sizes by Race - NLS of Young Women			
Survey Year	Total	non-Black	Black
1968 Initial Survey	5,159	3,700	1,459
2003 Final Survey	2,859	2,115v	744

*Interviews were also conducted with 2,206 widows or other family members of deceased respondents.