

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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Using the NLS to Study AGING

National Longitudinal Surveys



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 seven cohorts of men and women.

Which NLS cohorts have sample members age 50 and older?

Three of the four original NLS cohorts (for which data collection has ended) contain older sample members. Among the three NLS cohorts that continue to collect data, only the NLSY79 contains older sample members.

Older Men: Began in 1966 with 5,020 men born in 1906-21 (ages 45-59 in 1966). Sample members were interviewed 12 times from 1966 to 1983. A final interview in 1990 was conducted with 2,092 respondents who were 69-83 years old, and 2,206 family members of deceased respondents.

Mature Women: Began in 1967 with 5,083 women born in 1922-37 (ages 30-44 in 1967). Sample members were interviewed 21 times from 1967 to 2003. The final interview in 2003 was conducted with 2,237 women ages 66-80.

Young Women: Began in 1968 with 5,159 women born in 1943-53 (ages 14-24 in 1968). Sample members were interviewed 22 times from 1968 to 2003. The final interview in 2003 was conducted with 2,859 women ages 49-59.

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. The 2022 interview was conducted with 6,413 men and women ages 57-66.

The three remaining NLS cohorts (Young Men, NLSY79 Child and Young Adult, and 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth) do not have sample members over 50.

Which NLS data elements are relevant to research on aging?

The following topics have been covered in varying detail in all four cohorts that have age 50+ sample members. The NLSY79 will increasingly focus on health and retirement in future survey rounds.

- Retirement plans, expectations, and attitudes toward retirement and work
- Experiences and activities while in retirement (covered most prominently in the Older Men)
- Family income and assets by source, including details on pension plans, pension income, disability income, and home values. Note: A 1989 pension matching project for the Mature Women produced a supplemental dataset with detailed pension plan characteristics (collected directly from pension providers) for 1,329 sample members
- Wills, trusts, and financial planning
- Physical health, including health status, height/weight, health limitations, health conditions, occupational injuries,

hospitalization and medical care received

- Age at death and cause of death (NLSY79 cause of death is unavailable in the public data release; see round 29 restricted-use geocode/zip code data for National Death Index variables)
- Health insurance coverage
- Drug, alcohol and cigarette use
- Psychological well-being, including the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale in all cohorts
- Intra-family transfers (covered most prominently in the Mature & Young Women); proximity to children
- Risk preference and time preference covered most prominently in the NLSY79

