

## 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](https://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](https://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](mailto: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](mailto:NLS_info@bls.gov) or 202-691-7410.

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# Using the NLS to Study the MILITARY

# National Longitudinal Surveys



NLSMIL-122023

## 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 military service data?

The three ongoing NLS cohorts and two of the original NLS cohorts (for whom data collection has ended) have military-related data.

### 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97):

Began in 1997 with 8,984 men and women born in 1980-84 (ages 12-17 in 1997). Sample members were interviewed annually from 1997 to 2011 and biennially thereafter. The 2021 interview was conducted with 6,713 men and women ages 36-42. In addition, a COVID-19 Supplement was fielded in 2021.

NLSY97 respondents indicate which branch of the Armed Forces they served and whether they served as regular forces, reserves, or the National Guard. Occupational and pay information are collected from respondents age 16 or older who report their employer as an active branch of the Armed Forces. Round 13 introduced a series of questions aimed at military veterans and their experiences as they transitioned from military to civilian life.

### 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 2020 interview was conducted with 6,535 men and women ages 55-64.

NLSY79 military members consist of two groups. The first group is a special oversample of Armed Forces members. This group, which in 1979

included 1,280 respondents, was reduced to 201 in 1985. The second group consists of NLSY79 respondents who joined the military while part of the sample.

**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 onward, children turning age 15 and older during the survey year have been administered a Young Adult questionnaire that is similar to the NLSY79 questionnaire. In 2016, interviewed NLSY79 mothers completed the Mother Supplement for children in the household at least part-time who were 0 to 13 years of age as of the end of 2016, and children 12 and older were included in the Young Adult data collection. To date, more than 10,000 children have been interviewed in at least one survey round.

The Young Adult survey includes questions about military service in both the regular and reserve branches, including dates of service, branch, rank, training, active and inactive duty, and service-related disability. Young Adults are also asked if they have ever worked and/or been deployed in a combat zone and, if so, where and when.

**ASVAB:** In addition, almost 80% of the full NLSY97 sample and 94% of the full NLSY79 sample were administered the ASVAB by the NLS program. AFQT scores are available for NLSY79 respondents and a comparable score is provided for the NLSY97.

**Original NLS cohorts:** The two women's cohorts, Mature Women and Young Women, have limited data related to military pension income.

**Older Men (OM):** 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. Most served during World War II and some in the Korean War.

**Young Men (YM):** Began in 1966 with 5,225 men born in 1941-51 (ages 14-24 in 1966). Sample members were interviewed 12 times from 1966 to 1981. Most served during the Vietnam War.

## Which NLS data elements are relevant to research on military service?

The following topics have been covered in varying detail in the NLS cohorts.

- Branch of Armed Forces
- Dates of service
- Reason for choosing particular Armed Forces branch (NLSY79)
- Service period, war or peacetime (OM)
- Combat duty (CYA, NLSY97, YM)
- How respondent entered military, such as draft, enlistment, commissioned officer (CYA, YM)
- Reserve or National Guard service (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97)
- Participated in ROTC (NLSY79)
- Draft classifications (YM)
- Rank when leaving military service (CYA, NLSY97, YM)
- Reason for leaving Armed Forces (NLSY79)
- Armed Forces job category (NLSY79, YM)
- Received technical or vocational training in Armed Forces
- Military training used at current civilian job (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97, YM)
- Student at a military academy (CYA)
- Participated in Veteran's Education Assistance Program, amount of VEAP benefits (NLSY79)
- Attended TAP or A-CAP workshops, reasons for not attending workshops (NLSY97)
- Service medals (NLSY97)
- Disability related to military service (CYA, NLSY97, YM)
- Type of discharge (NLSY79), disability or medical discharge (YM)
- Veterans Affairs medical benefits (OM)
- Respondent or spouse received military income (NLSY79, CYA, NLSY97), military pension (OM)