

Obesity Data in the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult Surveys

The NLSY79 Child/Young Adult surveys provide researchers with the opportunity to study the effects of family transitions on child development across the lifespan. The NLSY79 Child/YA data can be used to investigate the connections between economic or employment instability, changes in family structure, or residential mobility on a variety of cognitive, educational, socio-emotional, health, and behavioral outcomes from childhood through adolescence into adulthood.

Birthweight and growth during childhood. The height and weight of children in the NLSY79 surveys have been recorded in every round of the NLSY79 child survey. Mothers also report each child's birthweight, whether the child was breastfed, when the child first began eating solid food, and whether he or she experienced serious feeding problems during the first year of life. The child file includes a series of questions, for younger children, about the degree to which the child is allowed choice in breakfast and lunch foods, how often the child eats with both parents, and whether the child eats what he or she is told. Children aged 10 and older report on television viewing habits, the amount of time spent playing video games, and whether they engage in sports or a physical activity after school.

When were the children measured? In the child interviews conducted from 1986 to 2014, the child's height and body weight were measured by the interviewer or recorded as reported by the mother. Mother reports of child height and weight are also available in 2016 and 2018.

How were the children measured? The method of report, tape measure, scale, mother, or child, was also recorded. Starting in 2006, children also self-reported their weight in the Child Self-Administered Supplement when they reached age 10-14.

Body weight, nutrition, sleep and self-image in young adulthood. NLSY79 children who have reached young adult age (15 years and older through 2014; 12 and older beginning in 2016) are asked their height and weight in each survey round. Starting in 2004, young adult respondents have provided information on possible factors in obesity, such as their vegetable and fruit consumption, exercise, computer and video game usage, and amount of sleep. Young adults report any eating disorder when asked if they have received psychological treatment in the past year. Questions about self-perception of weight and what respondents plan to do about their weight (also found in the NLSY97) were introduced into the survey beginning in 2006. Young adult mothers report about weight gain or loss during pregnancy, as well as the birth weight and length of their children. Beginning in 2010, male respondents are also asked about the birth weight of their children. Starting in 2010, all young adult parents are asked the current height and weight of their children with whom they have contact.

Mothers' weight history. NLSY79 respondents first reported their weight in 1981 and then in the majority of the subsequent survey rounds, including the latest round. Height was first reported in 1981 and then in several later rounds, in a variety of formats, including the latest round. In recent years, respondents are asked whether they are trying to lose weight, gain weight, or maintain the same weight (also asked of the Young Adult children). Female respondents with children have given information on their weight before pregnancy and their weight at the time of delivery. Recent survey years also include information on NLSY79 respondents' reported activity level and behavior related to nutrition.

A sampler of recent research on obesity from the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult

Eves, Robert, Dieter Wolke, Juliane Spiegler and Sakari Lemola. "Association of Birth Weight Centiles and Gestational Age with Cognitive Performance at Age 5 Years." *Jama Pediatrics* published online (31 August 2023). (*NLSY79 Young Adult*)

Lee, D. Susie, Natalie Nitsche and Kieron Barclay. "Body Mass Index in Early Adulthood and Transition to First Birth: Racial/Ethnic and Sex Differences in the United States NLSY79 Cohort." *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography* published online (25 October 2022): DOI: 10.1080/00324728.2022.2128396. (NLSY79)

Lee, Jaewon and Jennifer Allen. "Young Women's Food Consumption and Mental Health: The Role of Employment." *BMC Women's Health* 22, 91 (March 2022): DOI: 10.1186/s12905-022-01675-4. (NLSY79 Young Adult)

Neumark, David B. "The Effects of Minimum Wages on (Almost) Everything? A Review of Recent Evidence on Health and Related Behaviors." *Labour: Review of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations* published online (6 February 2024). (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult, NLSY97)

Oddo, Vanessa M., Castiel Chen Zhuang, Jerome A. Dugan, Sarah B. Andrea, Anjum Hajat, Trevor Peckham and Jessica C. Jones-Smith. "Association between Precarious Employment and BMI in the United States." *Obesity* published online (21 December 2022): DOI: 10.1002/oby.23591. (NLSY79)

Rafei, Ali, Michael R. Elliott, Rebecca E. Jones, Fernando Riosmena, Solveig A. Cunningham and Neil K. Mehta. "Obesity Incidence in U.S Children and Young Adults: A Pooled Analysis." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* published online (4 March 2022): DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2021.12.021. (NLSY79)

Spencer, Nicholas James, Johnny Ludvigsson, Yueyue You, Kate Francis, Yara Abu Awad, Wolfgang Markham, Tomas Faresjö, Jeremy Goldhaber-Fiebert, Pär Andersson White, Hein Raat, Fiona Mensah, Lise Gauvin and Jennifer J. McGrath. "Household Income and Maternal Education in Early Childhood and Activity-limiting Chronic Health Conditions in Late Childhood: Findings from Birth Cohort Studies from Six Countries." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* published online (July 2022): DOI: 10.1136/jech-2022-219228. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child)

Tabet, Maya and Pamela K. Xaverius. "Parental Emotional Support Trajectories and the Risk of Adolescent Overweight or Obesity." *Infant and Child Development* published online (10 July 2022): 10.1002/icd.2358. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Ufholz, Kelsey and James J. Werner. "Social and Demographic Correlates of Fast Food Consumption: A Review of Recent Findings in the United States and Worldwide." *Current Cardiovascular Risk Reports* 17 (11 October 2023): 233-243. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child, NLSY79 Young Adult)

Wolfe, Joseph D. "The Financial Correlates of Midlife Obesity." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 63,1, S1 (July 2022): S18-S27. (NLSY79)

Wright, Liam, Neil M. Davies and David Bann. "The Association between Cognitive Ability and Body Mass Index: A Sibling-Comparison Analysis in Four Longitudinal Studies." *PLOS Medicine* published online (13 April 2023): DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1004207. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult, NLSY97)

Zhuang, Castiel Chen, Jessica C. Jones-Smith, Sarah B. Andrea, Anjum Hajat and Vanessa M. Oddo. "Maternal Precarious Employment and Child Overweight/Obesity in the United States." *Preventive Medicine* published online (2 March 2023): 107471. (NLSY79, NLSY79 Child)

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