

TV-Viewing 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.

Mother-report. Starting with the first NLSY79 Child survey in 1986, questions on television viewing are posed to mothers for each of her children in the HOME-Short Form sections of the Mother Supplement (and in the Child Supplement in the 2000 survey). Mothers report the following:

- Number of hours per day the TV is on in the home
- Whether parents discuss TV programs with child
- Hours child spends watching TV on a typical weekday and weekend day

The HOME-SF scores. TV viewing is included in the computation of the HOME scores, according to the age of the child. For children ages 3-5 a question estimating the number of hours the TV is on is used in the total HOME score and emotional support subscale score. The total and cognitive stimulation HOME scores for children ages 6 and older include the single TV question about whether the child discusses programs.

Temperament assessment. Two questions related to TV are reported by mothers in the child surveys as part of the Temperament scales for children ages 4 to 6 years:

1. How often child obeys when told to turn off TV
2. How often child turns off TV with no protest

Child-report. Children age 10 and older provide self-reports of:

- Time spent watching TV on a typical weekday after school, typical Saturday and Sunday
- Who decides how much TV child watches (father, mother, stepfather, etc.)
- Family rules governing TV viewing
- How much they share with their parents about what they watch
- How often they argue with their parents about watching TV
- How often in past week TV or other privileges were taken away
- How often parents limit time child spends watching TV or playing video games

Video games. Starting in 2004, children ages 10 and older report whether they like to play video games after school. Since 2006, children ages 10 and older have been asked how many hours they play video games on a typical weekday and on a typical Saturday. Starting in 2008, children also estimate how many hours they play video games on a typical Sunday.

Young Adults. Since 2000, young adults (children 15 and older) report on the extent of their TV viewing time by estimating weekly hours spent watching. From 1996 to the current survey, young adults enrolled in grades 1-12 indicate how often their parents limit TV or video game time and, since 2002, how viewing patterns might vary after school or during the summer. Starting in 2000 young adult parents report to what extent they respond to their own children's behavior by withholding TV or other privileges. Starting in 2006, Young Adults report hours per week spent playing video games.

NOTE: In 1981, NLSY79 mothers completed a detailed time-use series, in their own interview, including time spent watching TV. In the 1984 main Youth survey, mothers were asked about TV watching as part of a health behaviors series.

Research on TV Viewing from the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult

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NLS data and documentation are publicly available for search and download at: <http://www.nlsinfo.org>

The annotated, searchable NLS bibliography can be accessed at: <http://www.nlsbibliography.org>