

## How do I obtain NLS data?

NLS data are made available to researchers through Investigator ([www.nlsinfo.org/investigator](http://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator)). Investigator allows users to search for variables of interest for any NLS cohort, create simple tabulations of the data, extract data files for analysis, and access documentation. NLS public data are immediately available and free of charge. See below for information on obtaining restricted-access NLS data such as the geocoded files.

## Where do I get more information?

Visit the NLS website ([www.bls.gov/nls/](http://www.bls.gov/nls/)) for online access to questionnaires and other documentation, a searchable, annotated bibliography of NLS research, news releases, updates, information on obtaining restricted-access data, 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.

The National Longitudinal Surveys are sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) with data collection and user services provided, under contract, by the Center for Human Resource Research (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.

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# Using the NLS to Study Aging

## 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?

Among the four original NLS cohorts (for which data collection has ended), three contain 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 13 times: in 1966-69, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1983 and 1990. The 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 5,085 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 66 to 80 years old.

**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 2,857 women ages 49-59.

Among the three NLS cohorts that continue to collect data, one contains older sample members:

**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 to 1994 and biennially thereafter. The 2012 interview was conducted with 7,301 men and women ages 47-56.

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

## 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
- ♦ 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 (cause of death currently unavailable in the NLSY79)
- ♦ 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
- ♦ Wills, trusts, and financial planning
- ♦ Risk preference and time preference (covered most prominently in the NLSY79)

## What are some of the core topics covered for all NLS cohorts?

- ♦ Labor force experiences, including detailed information on jobs held and start/stop dates of employment and unemployment spells; limited spouse/partner workforce experiences
- ♦ Schooling, including enrollment dates, schooling attainment, and select school characteristics
- ♦ Job training
- ♦ Military experiences
- ♦ Marital histories, children and dependents; spouse/partner characteristics
- ♦ Demographics and family background
- ♦ Geographic location and mobility
- ♦ Income and assets
- ♦ Health status