

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
- Job training
- Military experiences
- Marital histories, children and dependents; spouse/partner characteristics
- Demographics and family background
- Geographic location and mobility
- Income and assets
- Health

How do I obtain NLS data?

NLS data are made available to researchers through Investigator (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/) 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 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.

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.

NLS Director

Jeff Groen (BLS), groen.jeffrey@bls.gov

NLS Principal Investigators

NLSY97:

Lowell Taylor (NORC),

taylor-lowell@norc.org

NLSY79:

Randy Olsen (CHRR),

randy.olsen@chrr.osu.edu

Rosella Gardecki (CHRR),

rosella.gardecki@chrr.osu.edu

NLSY79 Child/Young Adult:

Elizabeth Cooksey (CHRR),

elizabeth.cooksey@chrr.osu.edu



Using the NLS to Study Education

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 education data?

Detailed education data are available for five of the seven NLS cohorts:

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). Previous to 2013 sample members were interviewed annually and biennially thereafter. The 2013 interview was conducted with 7,141 men and women ages 28-34.

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.

NLSY79 Child and Young Adult: Began in 1986 with children born to female NLSY79 respondents. Biennial data collection consists of a battery of cognitive, socioemotional and physiological assessments, 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. As of 2012, 11,512 children have been interviewed in at least one round.

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.

Young Men: 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. The final interview in 1981 was conducted with 3,398 men ages 29-40.

The five cohorts above also had special data collections of information from respondents’ schools and/or transcripts. Information varies and may not be present for all cohorts, but types of available data generally include enrollment status, GPA, test scores, courses taken, and school characteristics. Some information is only available on a restricted basis; visit www.bls.gov/nls for details about requesting access.

Basic information about highest grade completed, diplomas/degrees received, type of high school curriculum, and some years attended college is available for the two oldest cohorts:

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.

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 and again in 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.

Which NLS data elements are relevant to research on education?

Basic information on highest grade attended/completed and highest degree received is available for all cohorts. More detailed data are provided for the five youngest cohorts as described below (items are available in varying detail for the NLSY97, NLSY79, Child/Young Adult, Young Women, and Young Men unless otherwise noted).

Primary/Secondary School

- Current enrollment status/date of last enrollment
- Reason stopped attending high school
- School public/private (for NLSY79, only in 1979)
- High school curriculum (college prep, vocational, etc.)
- GED received (NLSY97, NLSY79, Young Adult)
- Suspensions/expulsions (NLSY97, NLSY79, Child/Young Adult)
- Grades repeated/skipped, remedial coursework (NLSY97, Child/Young Adult)
- Number of schools attended (NLSY97, Child/Young Adult)
- Math courses taken in high school (NLSY97, Young Women, Mature Women; also available in school survey for NLSY79)
- Extracurricular activities (Child/Young Adult, Young Men, Young Women)
- The NLSY97 presents information about school attendance in a month-by-month event history format

College

- Current enrollment status/dates of enrollment/field of study
- College tuition and financial aid/loans received
- IPEDS codes for colleges attended (NLSY97, NLSY79, Young Adult) and applied to (NLSY97, Young Adult) - available on geocode CD only
- College is 2-year or 4-year (NLSY97, NLSY79, Young Adult)
- The NLSY97 includes a detailed, term-by-term event history of college attendance, covering dates and terms enrolled, credits taken, GPA, field of study, and remedial math/English courses taken

Attitudes and Expectations

- Level of education desired and expected (all except NLSY97); whether respondent expects to earn high school diploma by age 20 and college degree by age 30 (NLSY97)
- Level of satisfaction with school (NLSY79, Child/Young Adult; Child includes a parental satisfaction rating as well)
- Parent involvement with school (Child/Young Adult)
- School environment/safety (Child/Young Adult; first round of NLSY79 and NLSY97)
- High school subjects enjoyed most/least (Young Women, Young Men)

Achievement/Aptitude Scores

- *NLSY97*: scores on SAT/ACT self-reported and recorded from high school transcripts; PIAT Math test given during several interviews to respondents in grade 9 or lower as of round 1; ASVAB administered to respondents and summary score included in data set
- *NLSY79*: scores on a variety of tests including SAT/ACT collected from high school transcripts; ASVAB administered to respondents and summary score included in data set
- *Child/Young Adult*: through age 14, repeated assessments given during interview including PIAT Math, PIAT Reading, PPVT, and Memory for Digit Span
- *Young Women and Young Men*: test scores on a range of tests including California Test of Maturity and Otis/Beta/Gamma recorded in school survey; survey staff created a composite “IQ Score” combining the results of these tests into a single variable