

## 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



## 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.

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# Using the NLS to Study Health

## 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 health data?

Detailed health data are available for all three ongoing 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. In 2012, 515 children (ages 0-14) and 5,808 young adults (ages 15-42) were interviewed.

Health data were also collected for all four original NLS cohorts (for which data collection has ended), although in less detail than for the ongoing cohorts.

**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.

**Young Men:** Began in 1966 with 5,225 men born in 1941-51 (ages 14-24 in 1966). Sample members were interviewed 12 times: in 1966-71, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1980 and 1981. The final interview in 1981 was conducted with 3,398 men ages 29-40.

**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.

## Which NLS data elements are relevant to research on health?

The following topics have been covered in varying detail in all cohorts unless noted.

- Height and weight (measured by interviewer for Child respondents; self-reported for all other respondents, including Young Adults)
- Self-reported assessments of current health; health conditions (hypertension, cancer, etc.); sensory function; work injuries
- Health limitations to employment and daily activities; limitations of respondents’ spouses for select cohorts
- Mental health, including the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale in all cohorts but the Young Men and NLSY97; the Affect Balance Scale in the Older Men and Mature Women; and the Mental Health Inventory in the NLSY97
- Drug, alcohol, and cigarette use (all cohorts but Young Men)
- Medical insurance coverage (all cohorts but Young Men)
- Age of death (all cohorts but Young Men); cause of death for Mature Women, Young Women, and Older Men; age and cause of death of parents for select cohorts

The following health-related data are available for select cohorts:

- Own birth weight (Child and Young Adult), children’s birth weight ( NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Experiences related to pregnancy, including weight gain, substance use, and pre-natal care (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Experiences related to sexual activity and contraception ( NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Diet and exercise ( NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Health care usage and preventive health care (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Menopause (Mature Women, Young Women); puberty (Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Aging-related cognitive function (Mature Women, Older Men, NLSY79)
- Early-life traumatic and stressful events (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Health-related knowledge (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Handedness (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Limited respondent-reported information on the health of parents and other family members (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97). More extensive health information is available for family members who are themselves respondents; for example, siblings groups are among the respondents in the Young Women, NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, and NLSY97, while mother/child groups can be found in the NLSY79/ Child and Young Adult, and in the Mature Women/Young Women.
- Caregiving to ill or disabled family members (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, Mature Women, Young Women)
- Assessments of early-childhood physical health, behavior, and cognition (Child and Young Adult)
- Extensive assessments of past/current health conditions at select ages (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97, Young Women)
- Self-reported tolerance towards risk (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)