

## 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



## 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 Substance Use

## 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 substance use data?

Detailed data on the use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco 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.

Limited data on alcohol and tobacco use are available for three of the four original NLS cohorts for which data collection has ended. The fourth original cohort (Young Men) provides no data on substance use.

**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.

**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.

## Which NLS data elements are relevant to research on substance use?

The following topics have been covered in varying detail for the cohorts listed.

- Quantity and frequency of alcohol use at various points in time (all cohorts but Young Men)
- Age at first alcohol use (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Attending school or work under the influence of alcohol (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Driving under the influence of alcohol (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Arrests related to alcohol use (NLSY97)
- Perceptions of the health effects of alcohol (NLSY97)
- Effects of alcohol use on health, behavior, and relationships (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult)
- Family history of alcohol use and experiences living with alcoholics (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult)
- Alcohol use among peers (Child and Young Adult)
- Alcohol use during pregnancy (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult)
- Quantity and frequency of cigarette use at various points in time (all cohorts but Young Men)
- Age when first smoked cigarettes (all cohorts but Young Men)
- Age when quit smoking (Mature Women, Young Women, Older Men)
- Peer pressure to smoke cigarettes (Child and Young Adult)
- Exposure to second-hand smoke (Child and Young Adult)
- Cigarette use during pregnancy (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult)
- Quantity and frequency of illegal drug use (including marijuana, hashish, cocaine, amphetamines, heroin, prescription drugs) at various points in time (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Age at first use of illegal drugs (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult, NLSY97)
- Attending school or work under the influence of drugs (NLSY97, NLSY79, Child and Young Adult)
- Drug use during military service (NLSY79)
- Experience selling illegal drugs (NLSY79, NLSY97)
- Effects of drug use on health, behavior, and relationships (Child and Young Adult)
- Drug use among peers (NLSY97, Child and Young Adult)
- Drug use during pregnancy (NLSY79, Child and Young Adult)