

U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

NLS Data Releases and Data Collections in 2010

The following is the latest schedule for NLSY79 and NLSY97 data collections and data releases:

- NLSY97 Survey. The NLSY97 Round-12 data are scheduled for release in the summer of 2010. Round-13 interviews are currently underway, with the Round-14 field effort slated to begin in September 2010.
- NLSY79 Main Survey. Round-23 data from the NLSY79 main survey will be released in spring 2010. Round-24 data collection is taking place currently.
- NLSY79 Child Survey and NLSY79 Young Adult Survey. Both surveys are fielded during the same approximate time frame as the main NLSY79 survey. The next full data release is scheduled for mid 2010 and will include 2008 data for both Child and Young Adult. A preliminary release of the 2008 Young Adult data is already available. □

Reminder: New Version of NLS Investigator Available

Researchers can access NLS data through an updated version of NLS Investigator. (See www.nlsinfo.org/investigator.) The upgrade features a redesign to make finding, selecting, and extracting variables easier and faster.

One helpful new feature is a set of preselected basic demographic variables

automatically available for users of each cohort as they begin their variable search. For instance, NLSY79 data users will find preselected variables available for race/ethnicity, gender, and PUBID (the respondent's unique identification code). Such variables are integral to most searches and can speed up research by eliminating the need to search for commonly chosen items. These variables will appear automatically on the list of selected variables found on the "Review Selected Variables" tab.

Both the new NLS Investigator and its predecessor, NLS Web Investigator, (www.nlsinfo.org/web-investigator) are currently available to users. Users are encouraged to start using the new version to become familiar with its features because the older version will eventually be removed. Users can access a user's guide for the new version by clicking on the Web site's Help link. □

The NLS in the Past Decade

From 2000 to 2009, the NLS interviewed tens of thousands of respondents and generated more than 200,000 variables. What follows is a brief synopsis of the NLS over the past decade.

Changes to Questionnaire Content

NLSY79. As the cohort has aged over the last decade (respondents are now 44 to 52 as they head into 2010), question modules on pensions and retirement expectations have been added. In addition, respondents went through an initial baseline health status module when they were roughly 40 years old. The older cohort members are now going through a follow-up health status series as they reach 50 years of age.

Questions on cognition (self-rating of memory, word recall, etc.) also have been added.

NLSY79 Young Adult. Over the course of the last decade, the young adult questionnaire has become more divergent from those questions asked of their NLSY79 mothers as youths. Survey instrument designers have evaluated what are the best questions to ask these respondents as they age, given the wealth of information collected on them as children. At the end of the decade, the Young Adult age range stretched from 15 years old to respondents in their late thirties. Many questions have been expanded to acknowledge this large age span, including questions asked about spouse/partner relationships and parenting attitudes and behaviors. The health questions also have been expanded to track health issues associated with aging in order to generate baseline information.

NLSY79 Child. Children born of NLSY79 mothers continue to be assessed and interviewed. The number of children has dropped significantly as a result of the aging of the mothers, and so the mothers' segment of the child instrumentation (the Mother Supplement) was incorporated into the main NLSY79 instrument during the latter part of the decade. A special asthma series was added during the decade in response to the significant rise in asthma in the United States. Starting in 2004, children age 14 answered questions about plans for work at age 35.

Because children under age 3 were generally not interviewed after 2004, there are fewer interviewer observations of the home environment for younger children starting with the Round 21 survey. This change resulted in computation of a set of alternative HOME scores starting in 2004 that did not include the interviewer observations.

NLSY97. In the past decade, NLSY97

respondents entered their twenties, which meant that most left home to pursue post-secondary schooling, training and/or careers, and many started establishing families of their own. The questionnaire content evolved to reflect these significant milestones. As the cohort left their parents' household, more questions about assets and debts were added, as were questions about spouses or partners. The questionnaire also included more health questions towards the end of the decade to establish a baseline of respondent health.

Final Data Collection for Women's Surveys

The final data collection for the NLS Women's Surveys (which are part of the NLS Original Cohorts) took place in 2003. The Mature Women cohort originally included 5,083 women ages 30-44 in 1967, and the Young Women cohort consisted of 5,159 women ages 14-24 in 1968. At the time of their last interview, the mature women (66 to 80 years old at that point) had been interviewed 20 times, while the young women (49 to 59 years old) had been interviewed 21 times. The data sets remain available, and researchers continue to publish using these data.

Behind-the-Scenes Advances

Technology changes. Technological upgrades and the advent of Web-based phone interviewing helped make the NLS field effort much more efficient in the past 10 years. With more access to data in real time, cases that encountered problems in progress were resolved more quickly, and ready access to interviewer comments allowed for more in-field solutions. Such advances also helped increase efficiencies in data production for releases and preparations for the next round.

"Early bird" fielding. NLSY79 respondents began being offered "early bird" opportunities to self-initiate their interviews. Progressive waves of respondents were informed of the survey and were offered an extra incentive to call in for their interview within a specified window of time. This helped boost the volume of early responses and the cost efficiency of interviewing.

Geographic data. Software for GIS mapping improved significantly in the past decade, which allowed for more precise geocoding of the residential data. Efforts

were made towards both streamlining the geocode release process as well as releasing new sets of variables to increase the data available for mobility and geographic-related research.

Sampling Weights. A new sample weighting program was introduced to create custom sampling weights that adjusted for survey design and for using data across multiple years.

The Advent of Web Investigator

Midway through the decade, the NLS Web Investigator was introduced, which allowed researchers access to public NLS data online through a straightforward, no-cost procedure. NLS variables could now be identified, selected, and extracted, and frequencies or cross tabulations could be run directly through the Investigator website from any computer location with Web access. Within the Web Investigator, the codebook information and survey instruments were linked so that users could easily view the question text, understand the universe for individual questions, peruse the frequency distributions, and go to the preceding and next questions in the survey.

At the end of the decade, an updated version of the Web interface, NLS Investigator, was introduced with the goal of making data revisions easier to release and to remove errors more quickly.

On Line NLS Support Documents

With the advancement of Web capabilities, the decade saw a distinct shift from hard copy to online NLS user documentation. Users Guides became solely online publications, as did codebook supplements, the NLS News, and other documentation. This advance allowed documentation accompanying new data releases to be available much more quickly and easily, and corrections to documentation to be made in a more-timely manner. In addition, online tutorials were introduced to help researchers understand various aspects of the NLSY data files and their use.

Bibliography Growth

Researchers continued to utilize NLS data as a rich data resource. During the 10-year period, 2,684 research citations were added to the online Annotated NLS Bibliography (www.nlsbibliography.org), bringing the total to 6,428. Particularly encourag-

ing were the 319 NLS-related Ph.D. dissertations cited, since many researchers introduced to the NLS as graduate students continue to utilize the NLS in their post-graduate work.

NLS-Related Workshops and Conference Presence

NLS research workshops were held in 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2009, hosting more than 250 users from universities and organizations across the globe. These workshops provided opportunities for NLS users to meet and share ideas and to learn the intricacies of NLS data and

The NLS has increased its visibility by exhibiting at research and data management meetings during the past decade, including the American Sociological Association, the Population Association of America, and other national association conferences.

Expectations for the New Decade

While future funding and technology advances can only be predictions, it is expected that the new decade will see longitudinal data collection continue for the NLSY97, the NLSY79, and the Young Adult and Child surveys. As the cohorts mature, more questions about health issues and retirement options will likely be added. In light of the current economy, there are plans for adding more questions about personal finance challenges. In addition, there will be an increase in Web-friendly user materials (such as tutorials), and current materials will be honed to better suit the needs of Web-based research. □

Spotlight: The Military Experience of NLS Cohorts

Looking for information about the military experience of NLS respondents? Questions asked in the NLSY79, NLSY97, Young Adult cohort, and the Older Men and Young Men original cohorts offer researchers a rich opportunity to study respondents' U.S. Armed Forces participation. Following is a cohort-by-cohort description of those military variables:

NLSY79 Military Variables

With military questions in every NLSY79 survey round, this cohort database contains considerable data on military occupations, training, wages, and testing

scores. In particular, questionnaires from 1979 through 1985 contain substantial information on military experience.

NLSY79 military members consist of two groups. The first is a special oversample of members of the Armed Forces. This group, which in 1979 included 1,280 respondents, was reduced to 201 respondents in 1985 because of funding cutbacks. The second group includes NLSY79 respondents who joined the military during the time they were part of the sample group. Many NLSY79 respondents enlisted in the reserves when their active duty term was finished and provided information about this duty as well.

Questions about a respondent's military occupation (MOS) were asked in 1979–85. Respondents reported their primary and secondary military occupations and gave information on how much training they had received. During this span of survey years, military respondents also answered questions about the number of weeks of formal training they had received in the military, as well as the amount of on-the-job training and the formal schooling they had received. Each survey also contained questions about the usefulness of military training for civilian life. In addition, the 1980–85 surveys asked respondents for the reasons they enlisted (such as the desire to travel, family tradition, and unemployment).

In the early years of the NLSY79, military pay information was collected for individuals in the active military, individuals in the reserves, and individuals who had separated from the military. Information also was gathered on the amount of educational and enlistment benefits received. Respondents who left the military were asked for the primary reason for their separation. Through the 2002 survey, respondents reported any Veteran's Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) participation. (VEAP is a program that superseded the G.I. Bill program.)

In all years of the NLSY79, including the most recent fielding, respondents with military experience reported their branch of Armed Forces, months spent in Armed Forces, pay grade and income, and use of military skills on a civilian job.

As this cohort has matured, fewer details about military service have been asked. However, each survey year NLSY79 respondents still provide basic information

about any military involvement.

Military-related questions for the NLSY79 may be found in the "Military" Area of Interest. To determine if the respondent is currently serving in the military, use the variable titles "R ENTERED ACTIVE MILITARY SINCE LAST INT AND IS CURRENTLY SERVING" [Q4-28] or "R WAS SERVING IN MILITARY AT LAST INT AND IS CURRENTLY SERVING" [Q4-22]. For the years when the CPS questions were asked, researchers can look at the -4s in the variable titled "ACTIVITY MOST OF SURVEY WEEK CPS ITEM." Since activity military personnel are skipped around the CPS section, the -4s for this variable should indicate respondents who are military.

Young Adult Military Variables

The young adult respondents are asked to report on military topics similar to those addressed by respondents in the main NLSY79, including the branch of Armed Forces in which current or past service was completed, months spent in the Armed Forces, and participation in VEAP. Young adults with military experience also answer questions about their military occupation, the type and amount of military training they have received, and any formal education received while they were in the service.

Beginning in 2002 (in response to the aftermath of September 11, 2001), young adults who were reservists were asked whether they had ever been called up to active duty and, if so, when. Members of the regular (active duty) forces were asked if they had ever been on inactive reserve and if so, if they were ever recalled to active duty. In 2008, respondents began providing details about any deployment to a foreign country during a period of combat.

Young adult respondents also answered questions about taking any high school or college courses while they were in the military, their level of satisfaction with the military, and about using military job skills in subsequent civilian jobs.

To find military-related variables for this group, researchers should search using the "YA Military" Area of Interest on the child/young adult data set. Use the variable Q5-3G to determine if a respondent is currently on active duty.

NLSY97 Military Variables

Beginning in 1998, the NLSY97 database has provided military service information in the employment section through employer loops (Employer 1, Employer 2, etc.) Respondents who report their employer as a branch of the Armed Forces then provide pay grade information. Respondents in the Armed Forces also answer questions about their pay grade when they entered and when they left or at the date of their interview for those currently serving. Respondents also indicate whether they left the military at the end of their term of service or before then.

Round 13 data (currently being collected and slated for release in 2011) will feature an expanded military series asked of veterans, including questions about combat duty, service medals, disabilities, and transitions back into the civilian world.

To find military-related questions for the NLSY97, researchers should look in the "Employers and Jobs" and "Military" Areas of Interest on the NLSY97 data set. To determine whether a respondent was serving in the Armed Forces for a particular survey year, refer to the variables with the prefix YEMP_MILFLAG.

Young Men and Older Men Military Variables

The NLS Young Men and Older Men surveys were part of the Original Cohort effort. The male cohort groups were interviewed regularly from 1966 to 1981, with a follow-up interview for the Older Men in 1990.

The Older Men respondents provided information about dates of military service in the 1967 and 1976 surveys. The 1966 survey asked respondents about any vocational training programs they had attended while in the Armed Forces. The military also was referenced in older men surveys as a source of disability payments, pension or retirement income, and medical care payments.

Many members of the young men's cohort were of service age during the Vietnam War, so a substantial amount of data was collected about the young men's military service. Armed Forces questions included the branch in which they served, the method for entering (voluntarily enlisting or being drafted), the amount of time spent on active duty, any combat service, military

occupation, training details, disabilities or medical discharges, and income received from disability or veterans' benefits.

Military questions in the young men survey also asked about rank, age, and date of separation from active duty and whether their time in the Armed Forces had helped or hurt their subsequent careers. Respondents who had never served in the military indicated whether they had ever tried to enter active service and why they were not accepted. The 1967–71 questionnaires also recorded the draft classification of each age-eligible respondent and, if applicable, the reason for his 1-Y or 4-F rejection.

Military-related variables in the young men's and older men's cohort data sets can be found by using the phrase "Armed Forces" in the Word in Title search or in the "Military" Area of Interest.

ASVAB Variables

Researchers interested in military-related variables may notice that both the NLSY79 and NLSY97 databases contain several ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) variables. The ASVAB is a multiple-choice test used to determine qualification for enlistment in the military. The respondents of both cohorts were administered the test battery as part of national efforts to update the norms of the test. Respondents took the ASVAB whether or not they were interested in joining the military.

NLSY79 respondents took ASVAB in 1980. Scores from select sections of this test may be used to construct an approximate and unofficial Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score. This AFQT score is a general measure of trainability and a primary criterion of enlistment eligibility. To find these variables, search using "ASVAB" or "AFQT" in NLS Investigator's Word in Title search option.

During Round 1, the NLSY97 sample took the ASVAB as part of their participation in Profile of American Youth 1997. ASVAB scores are available for NLSY97 respondents. To help users, NLS program staff created a summary score variable (ASVAB_MATH_VERBAL_SCORE_PCT) for four key ASVAB subtests to provide a variable similar to an AFQT score. Search "ASVAB" in the Word in Title search option to find these variables.

NLS-Related Military Research

Are you interested in what other researchers have learned about the military experience of NLS respondents? The Annotated NLS Bibliography (www.nlsbibliography.org) provides abstracts of journal articles, dissertations, conference presentations, and more. A recent search using military draft, enlistment, personnel, recruitment, service, and training as key words yielded a total of 118 citations.

How to Access Military Variables

As with other NLS public variables, military variables can be accessed free of charge using NLS Investigator at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator. □

NLSY Terms to Know: "Date of Last Interview"

Each survey year, NLSY respondents report changes (in employment, household structure, etc.) that have occurred recently in their lives. The respondent's "Date of Last Interview" (often abbreviated DLI or DOLI in variable titles) is frequently used as the anchor date for those changes and thus appears regularly throughout the NLS cohort questionnaires. For example, in the NLSY79 marital status question T00063.00, respondents answer the following query: "Have there been any changes in your marital status since [date of last interview]?" The computer-assisted (CAPI) questionnaire comes preloaded with the respondent's date of last interview so that the respondent-specific date automatically pops into the DLI bracket. This allows respondents to hear or see the actual date of the previous interview rather than expecting the respondents to recall it themselves.

Anchoring significant events to the date of last interview rather than asking about what has happened in the previous year allows researchers to construct a more continuous record of significant events. Since not all surveys are annual, not all respondents can be interviewed each survey round, and the month in which a respondent is interviewed may vary from survey year to survey year.

Note: On occasion, an interviewer begins an interview with a respondent but

circumstances occur that may require the remaining part of the interview to take place on a later date. For these cases, the date of last interview is considered to be the date that the data collection was first initiated.

Frequently Asked Questions

The NLS staff encourages researchers to contact NLS User Services with questions and problems encountered while accessing and using NLS data or documentation. Every effort is made to answer these inquiries. Following are some recent questions and answers that may be of general interest to NLS users:

Q1. How can I find the number of NLSY97 respondents who lived in cities?

A1. The public release of the NLSY97 data has a rural/urban variable created for each round, CV_URBAN-RURAL, which assigns each respondent an urban or rural status based on the 2000 Census standards. In the latest data release (round 11), this variable indicates that approximately 78 percent of NLSY97 respondents lived in urban areas.

Q2. Could you explain what an NLSY97 custom weight is supposed to represent?

A2. The sampling weight, when divided by 100, shows how many people in the United States that each member of the NLSY97 sample represents. For example, if a respondent has a weight of 73500, then that respondent represents 735 people. The sampling weight in each round is adjusted for attrition so that the total count of people the sample represents stays the same over time. When looking at respondents from multiple rounds, researchers should use the custom weight program, found through the NLS Investigator at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator.

Q3. What variable can be used to determine whether a respondent in the Young Adult cohort has graduated from high school?

A3. In each round, young adult respondents are asked for details concerning high

school graduation (see the “YA School” Area of Interest), including whether the respondent has a diploma or a high school equivalency (GED) certificate and the month and year it was received. This set of questions is asked in each round to those respondents who did not previously report a diploma or a GED. Also available is the created variable “HIGHEST GRADE OF SCHOOL COMPLETED AS OF DATE OF LAST YA INTERVIEW” (Y12113.00), which gives the highest grade completed as of the last time the young adult was interviewed. The “Grade 12 or higher” answer category indicates graduation from high school or a GED. Note that this variable is not round specific, which is why the designated survey year is XRND.

Q4. Does the NLSY79 data set include any information on a respondent’s arrest history?

A4. Information on crime, delinquency, and arrest records was collected from NLSY79 respondents in a special self-report supplement during the 1980 interview. This supplement detailed respondents’ participation in and income from illegal activities and their contacts with the criminal justice system. Arrest information variables can be found in the “Illegal” Area of Interest in NLS Investigator at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator. Respondents were also asked in 1994 about any trouble with the police resulting from excessive alcohol use (see R49808.00). □

Completed NLS Research

The following is a listing of recent research based on data from the NLS cohorts that has not appeared in its current form in a previous issue of the NLS News (see the NLS Annotated Bibliography at www.nlsbibliography.org for a comprehensive listing of NLS-related research):

Averett, Susan L., Asia Sikora, and Laura M. Argys. “Symposium on the Economics of Obesity: For Better or Worse: Relationship Status and Body Mass Index.” *Economics and Human Biology* 6,3 (December 2008): 330-349. [NLSY79]

Balsa, Ana I., Jenny F. Homer, and Michael T. French. “Health Effects of Parental Problem Drinking on Adult Children.” *Journal*

of Mental Health Policy and Economics 12,2 (June 2009): 55-66. [NLSY79]
Berdahl, Terceira Ann, and Julia McQuillan. “Occupational Racial Composition and Nonfatal Work Injuries.” *Social Problems* 55,4 (November 2008): 549-572. [NLSY79]

Black, Dan A., Robert T. Michael, and Charles R. Pierret. “Knowing Younger Workers Better: Information from the NLSY97.” *Monthly Labor Review* 131,9 (September 1, 2008): 42-51. [NLSY97]

Caputo, Richard K. “Adolescent Sexual Debut: A Multi-System Perspective of Ethnic and Racial Differences.” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 19,4 (September 2009): 330-358. [NLSY97]

Cunha, Flavio, and James J. Heckman. “Economics and Psychology of Inequality and Human Development.” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 7,2-3 (April 2009): 320-364. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Dalmia, Sonia, and Paul Sicilian. “Kids Cause Specialization: Evidence for Becker’s Household Division of Labor Hypothesis.” *International Advances in Economic Research* 14,4 (November 2008): 448-459. [NLSY79]

Duncan, Greg J., Ariel Kalil, Susan E. Mayer, Robin L. Tepper, and Monique R. Payne. “The Apple Does Not Fall Far From the Tree.” In: *Unequal Chances: Family Background and Economic Success*. S. Bowles, H. Gintis, and M. O. Groves eds., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008: 23-79. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]

Farkas, George. “How Educational Inequality Develops.” In: *The Colors of Poverty: Why Racial and Ethnic Disparities Exist*. A. C. Lin and D. R. Harris eds., New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008: 105-134. [Children of the NLSY79]

Gee, Gilbert C., and Katrina Michelle Walsemann. “Does Health Predict the Reporting of Racial Discrimination or Do Reports of Discrimination Predict Health? Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of

Youth.” *Social Science and Medicine* 68,9 (May 2009): 1676-1684. [NLSY79]
Green, Carole A., and Marianne A. Ferber. “Long-Term Impact of Labor Market Interruptions: How Crucial Is Timing?” *Review of Social Economy* 66,3 (September 2008): 351-379. [NLSY79]

Hair, Elizabeth Catherine, M. J. Park, Thomson J. Link, and Kristin Anderson Moore. “Risky Behaviors in Late Adolescence: Co-Occurrence, Predictors, and Consequences.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 45,3 (September 2009): 253-261. [NLSY97]

Hjalmarsson, Randi. “Crime and Expected Punishment: Changes in Perceptions at the Age of Criminal Majority.” *American Law and Economics Review* 11,1 (Spring 2009): 209-248. [NLSY97]

Kaestner, Robert, and Michael Grossman. “Effects of Weight on Children’s Educational Achievement.” *Economics of Education Review* 28,6 (December 2009): 651-661. [Children of the NLSY79]

Lahey, Benjamin B., Carol A. Van Hulle, Kate Keenan, Paul J. Rathouz, Brian M. D’Onofrio, Joseph Lee Rodgers, and Irwin D. Waldman. “Temperament and Parenting during the First Year of Life Predict Future Child Conduct Problems.” *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 36,8 (November 2008): 1139-1158. [Children of the NLSY79]

Lee, Ji-Youn, Michael B. Toney, and Eddy Helen Berry. “Social Status Inconsistency and Migration.” *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 27,1 (March 2009): 35-49. [NLSY79]

Lee, Kyunghee. “Bidirectional Effects of Early Poverty on Children’s Reading and Home Environment Scores: Associations and Ethnic Differences.” *Social Work Research* 33,2 (June 2009): 79-94. [NLSY79]

Mandara, Jelani, Fatima Varner, Nereira Greene, and Scott Richman. “Intergenerational Family Predictors of the Black-White Achievement Gap.” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101,4 (November 2009): 867-878. [Children of the NLSY79]
Mendle, Jane, K. Paige Harden, Eric Turkheimer, Carol Van Hulle, Brian M.

D'Onofrio, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Joseph Lee, Rodgers, Robert E. Emery, and Benjamin B. Lahey. "Associations Between Father Absence and Age of First Sexual Intercourse." *Child Development* 80,5 (September/October 2009): 1463-1480. [Children of the NLSY79]

Nsiah, Christian, and Prathibha V. Joshi. "Academic Cost of Being Overweight: Rural vs. Urban Area Differences - A Quantile

Regression Approach." *Research in Higher Education Journal* 4 (September 2009): 91-103. [NLSY97]

Nyborg, Helmuth. "Intelligence-Religiosity Nexus: A Representative Study of White Adolescent Americans." *Intelligence* 37,1 (January-February 2009): 81-93. [NLSY97]

Paserman, Marco Daniele. "Job Search and

Hyperbolic Discounting: Structural Estimation and Policy Evaluation." *Economic Journal* 118,31 (August 2008): 1418-1452. [NLSY79]

Vaske, Jamie, and Krista Gehring. "Mechanisms Linking Depression to Delinquency for Males and Females." *Feminist Criminology* 4,4 (October 2009): 1-21. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult] □

NLS News



NLS Contact Information

NLS News is published quarterly by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It is distributed both nationwide and abroad without charge to researchers using NLS data, as well as to other interested persons.

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