Release of Preliminary 2012 NLSY79 Young Adult Data

A preliminary version of the 2012 Young Adult data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) is now available for researchers through the NLS Investigator (www.nlsinfo.org/investigator). The young adults surveyed in this round are older children of female respondents in the NLSY79. The release includes all the data collected for young adults in the 2012 data collection round, and it includes a limited number of created variables, which are summary variables based on a number of variables from the raw data, such as hourly wage.

Because the release is preliminary, it will not include data from any of the data collection rounds before 2012. However, the new data can be easily linked to the final 2010 NLSY79 Child and Young Adult data release and to the most recent NLSY79 main Youth data release. The final 2012 Child and Young Adult dataset, including all previous data, is scheduled to be released later in 2014. (Users are reminded that the reference numbers on the preliminary Young Adult release will not match the reference numbers on the final merged Child and Young Adult data release.)

In 2012, NLS field interviewers completed interviews with 5,782 NLSY79 young adult respondents, or 81 percent of those eligible for the survey. There were 2,829 men and 2,953 women interviewed. The 2012 survey round is the 10th wave of young adult data. Since 1994, children of NLSY79 female respondents age 15 and older no longer receive cognitive assessments or other assessments given to their younger counterparts. Instead, they participate in an interview, either in person or on the telephone, that asks about work experience, military experience, schooling, training, family background, health, fertility, income and assets, dating and relationships, attitudes, and drug and alcohol use.

The 2012 Young Adult questionnaire remains similar to the 2010 questionnaire, but there were some notable additions to the questionnaire content:

The NLSY Young Adult survey instrument now includes more questions from the NLSY79 Main Study Mother Supplement, allowing users to make greater intergenerational comparisons. The “Children in the Household” section queries respondents in the Young Adult cohort who have biological children, adopted children, stepsons or stepdaughters, or children of a partner living with them.

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Of special note is the addition of the Behavior Problems Index, a scale created by Nicholas Zill and James Peterson to measure the frequency, range, and type of childhood behavior problems for children age 4 and over. Parents indicate how often each child may have displayed each of 28 specific behaviors (such as bullying, impulsivity, and sadness) over the 3 months prior to the interview date.

The “Children” section in the Young Adult survey included new questions about parental response to children's misbehaviors and report cards with lower-than-expected grades; how much choice children ages 2 to 5 get in the food they eat at meals; parental expectations about household chores; and whether the child receives special lessons or belongs to organizations that encourage sports, music, art, dance, drama, etc. In addition, a previously included question about how often children 10 and older read for pleasure is now also asked about 6- to 9-year-olds.

For the first time, the Young Adult questionnaire included two sets of questions that asked about young adult respondents’ experiences with both day-to-day discrimination (for all respondents) and major instances of discrimination (for respondents age 21 and older). Respondents indicated what they believe was the main reason behind each type of discrimination: ethnicity, gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation, weight or other aspect of physical appearance, name, or education/income level.

Also new to the Young Adult survey was a series of questions on childhood adversity. Respondents answered questions about growing up with household members who were depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal; problem drinkers or alcoholics; or physical abusers. Respondents also said how much parental love and affection they received in their formative years. NLSY79 main study respondents answered these questions about themselves in the most recent survey, thus making it possible for intergenerational research for these childhood issues.

The latest Young Adult survey round also asked a subset of respondents the mini-IPIP, a shortened version of the International Personality Item Pool, in addition to the TIPI (Ten-Item Personality Inventory), which has been administered to the Young Adult cohort since 2006. The mini-IPIP asks respondents the accuracy of descriptive phrases about one's self, such as “I am the life of the party,” “I sympathize with other’s feelings,” and “I get upset easily.” Having data from both the mini-IPIP and the TIPI will allow researchers to compare these two ways of measuring the Big Five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism).

New health-related variables were added to this survey round, including a short series of questions about head injuries. Respondents age 29 and older answered questions about whether they ever had a blow to the head severe enough to require medical attention or cause loss of consciousness or memory loss, the number of head traumas they have experienced, and their age when the most recent head trauma occurred. Also, for the first time, two questions about suicidal ideation were included (for respondents 21 and older).

In addition, questions about periods of exercise, asked in previous surveys, were updated from a “more than 15 minutes” timeframe to “for 30 minutes or more” to align with the Centers for Disease Control current exercise recommendations for young adults. Also, new wording in the computer-use questions now reflects a fuller, more up-to-date set of activities and devices (such as the use of as texting, smartphones, Skype, and Facebook or other social networking sites).

Finally, the “Income” section now includes a question about whether or not respondents have rainy day savings that would cover expenses for 3 months.

In 1994 and 1996, the NLSY79 Young Adult samples included all children age 15 and older. In 1998, the Young Adult sample was limited to those age 15 to 20. In 2000, the sample again included young adults age 15 and older; however, approximately 40 percent of the young adults age 15 to 20 from the Black and Hispanic oversample
families were not fielded in 2000 for budgetary reasons. The young adults not interviewed in 2000 were again eligible to be interviewed from 2002 through 2012. There were no sample restrictions from 2002 to 2008.

Beginning in 2010, a new pattern of administration at the upper ages was instituted; respondents over age 30 are interviewed once every 4 years, and respondents age 30 and under will continue to be interviewed every 2 years. In 2012, interviewers primarily conducted interviews by telephone, with a small portion (approximately 8.4 percent) of the 5,782 interviews completed in person.

Researchers interested in accessing the NLSY79 Young Adult preliminary data release should visit www.nlsinfo.org/investigator. A user’s guide for the NLSY79 Child and Young Adult surveys is available at http://www.nlsinfo.org/content/cohorts/NLSY79-Children. To see the questionnaire itself, go to the “Other Documentation” section within the NLSY79 Children and Young Adult cohort area.

Spotlight: Health Variables for the Middle-Aged NLSY79 Respondent

Before 1998, most of the NLSY79 health questions focused on health concerns that restricted or inhibited the respondent’s ability to work. Beginning with the 1998 survey round, as NLSY79 respondents matured into middle age, the “Health” section was expanded to provide a baseline profile of the respondent’s overall health at 40 and 50. The 40+ and 50+ Health Modules are asked in the first interview the respondent participates in after he or she turns 40 and 50, respectively. These module questions allow researchers to examine the interrelationship of health and labor market activity before retirement.

The 40+ Health Module

This module contains the following topics:

- **Depression scale.** Respondents answered a section of questions from the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) scale. Respondents were given a series of statements about feelings or behaviors (poor appetite, “the blues,” trouble concentrating, restless sleep, and so on) and asked how often they experienced these during the previous week. Note: The full CES-D was administered to all respondents in the 1992 survey round.

- **Health care visits.** These variables give researchers the date of the respondent’s last physical exam and the date of the last visit to a health care professional for any reason. Information on individuals who never visit a doctor is available as well.

- **Health and life status of parents.** Respondents answer questions about whether their mothers and fathers are alive or deceased. If a parent is deceased, respondent is asked to name the main cause of death. Respondents are also asked to indicate whether their parents had any major health problems and, if so, what those major health problems were.

- **SF-12 Health Survey scale.** The SF-12 scale, a 12-question health survey designed by John Ware of the New England Medical Center Hospital, helps provide summary measures of the respondents’ mental and physical health.

- **Chronic health conditions.** Respondents indicate if they have ever been diagnosed with hypertension, diabetes, cancer, lung diseases, heart problems, stroke, emotional/nervous/psychiatric problems, or arthritis. They are also asked about having asthma, back problems, high cholesterol, frequent headaches, and other health issues. Respondents indicate if they have had a fracture in the last 10 years, have ever...
been unconscious due to a head injury, and if they are often troubled with pain. (Note: Pain questions were asked only in the 1998 and 2000 surveys.) If respondents spend more than 10 minutes a day on taking care of health problems or conditions, they estimate how many minutes a day they spend. In addition, respondents answer questions about vision and wearing corrective lenses, quality of hearing, and whether they wear hearing aids.

**The 50+ Health Module**

This module repeats many of the items of the 40+ Health Module, including the CES-D scale, the SF-12 Health Survey scale, the health and life status of the respondents’ parents, and chronic health conditions (expanded to a more extensive list). Additional topical areas include the following:

- The use of special equipment to aid in daily activities
- Level of difficulty to accomplish certain activities, such as run a mile, walk several blocks, walk one block, sit up, get up from a chair, climb stairs, carry weights of more than 10 pounds, stop/kneel/crouch, pick up a dime (tests manual dexterity), extend arms over shoulders, or pull or push large objects
- Sleep issues, including amount of sleep at night, length of time needed to go to sleep, number of naps per week that last 5 minutes or more, trouble falling asleep initially, trouble getting back to sleep once awakened, and feeling unrested

Users can access the health variables through NLS Investigator, [www.nlsinfo.org/investigator](http://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator), by searching in the “Health Module 40 & Over” and “Health Module 50 & Over” Areas of Interest in the NLSY79 dataset.

**NLS Booth Displayed at Major Conferences**

Attending a major academic conference this year? Chances are, the NLS information booth will be in attendance as well. Each year, personnel from NLS User Services set up shop at several conferences across the United States to provide information about the NLS data. Potential users and veteran users alike can get details about topical areas, obtain tips about data intricacies, and view demonstrations on how to access data from the NLS Investigator. There are also occasional NLS workshops in conjunction with the conference.

The current booth schedule includes appearances at conferences held by the following organizations:

- American Economic Association (AEA)
- American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- American Public Health Association (APHA)
- American Sociological Association (ASA)
- Gerontological Society of America (GSA)
- Population Association of America (PAA)
- Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR)

Can’t make it to a conference? NLS User Services can assist researchers with data questions by phone (614-442-7366) and email ([usersvc@chrr.osu.edu](mailto:usersvc@chrr.osu.edu)). The recently redesigned [www.nlsinfo.org](http://www.nlsinfo.org) is also a user-friendly resource with introductions to all the NLS cohorts and substantial information on data topics, data use, and documentation details.
NLSY Researcher Interviewed on NPR

*Morning Edition*, the widely heard radio news program on National Public Radio (NPR), featured an interview with Aliya Saperstein, an assistant professor at Stanford University who has used NLSY79 data to research how stereotypes drive perceptions of race. In the interview, which aired on February 11, 2014, Steve Inskeep, *Morning Edition’s* cohost, talked with Dr. Saperstein and Shankar Vedantam, NPR’s social science correspondent. Dr. Saperstein’s research (in collaboration with Andrew Penner), challenges the idea that race is fixed. Some respondents classified themselves differently when asked their race at different points in time (and interviewers did as well); the changes in classification were not random and were correlated with respondents’ changes in life circumstances.

A transcript of the interview can be found at [www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/02/11/275087586/study-stereotypes-drive-perceptions-of-race](http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/02/11/275087586/study-stereotypes-drive-perceptions-of-race). Dr. Saperstein is the coauthor of several articles and presentations on the subject of racial perception. Here are some of her recent NLS-related journal articles:


Right-handed, Left-handed, or Somewhere in Between? Handedness Variables in the NLSY

Hand dominance variables can be found in the NLSY79, NLS97, and the NLSY79 Child and Young Adult datasets.

The NLSY97 respondents were asked in 2001 and 2002, “Are you left-handed or right-handed?” (See YSAQ-INTRO-2A.) Then, in the 2011 survey (round 15, the latest round to be released), respondents received an expanded list of questions on hand dominance for specific activities, including writing, throwing a ball, brushing teeth, slicing with a knife, and holding a nail for hammering purposes. Respondents indicated if they performed these activities always with the left or right hand, usually with the left or right hand, or if they used both hands equally. (See YTEL-85~000001 through ~000005.)

The NLSY79 Child and Young Adult dataset features a series of questions related to handedness. Young adults in 1996 and 1998 answered questions about the dominant hand used in writing, teeth brushing, and throwing a ball at a target. (See Y09035.00 through Y09038.00 in 1998.) They also were asked if, as a child, they had ever been forced to change the hand with which they wrote. Similarly, starting in 1996, mothers reported in each Child survey which hand their children used for writing, ball throwing, and teeth brushing.

For the NLSY79 cohort, respondents in 1993 answered one question about handedness: “Were you born naturally left-handed or right-handed?”

Handedness variables are not available for the Original Cohort (Young Men, Older Men, Young Women, and Mature Women) datasets.

Users can find the variables in NLS Investigator ([www.nlsinfo.org/investigator](http://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator)) by using “hand” for the “Word in Title” search criteria.
Data Collection and Release Schedule

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

- **NLSY97 Survey.** Data from rounds 1 through 15 of the NLSY97 are now available. These data were collected in the survey years between 1997 and 2011. Round-16 NLSY97 data collection is currently taking place, with a round-16 data release scheduled for release in 2015.

- **NLSY79 Main Survey.** Data from rounds 1 through 24 of the NLSY79 are available. These data were collected in the survey years between 1979 and 2010. Round-25 data collection began in the latter part of 2012 and ended in mid-2013, with round-25 data to be released in the fall of 2014. Round-26 fielding is scheduled to start in the latter part of 2014.

- **NLSY79 Child Survey and NLSY79 Young Adult Survey.** Both of these surveys are fielded during approximately the same timeframe as the main NLSY79 survey, with the 2014 data collection scheduled to begin in the fall. Data from survey years through 2010 are now available. A preliminary single-year release of the Young Adult data from the 2012 round is also now available, with a full Child and Young Adult data release of all survey years through 2012 to be released later in 2014.

Each NLS cohort’s dataset includes a merger of all previously released rounds from that cohort. All public NLS data can be accessed free of charge at [www.nlsinfo.org/investigator](http://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator), which features data from the active NLSY cohorts as well as the four NLS Original Cohorts: Older Men (1966–1990 survey years), Mature Women (1967–2003 survey years), Young Women (1968–2003 survey years), and Young Men (1966–1981 survey years).

NLSY97 Terms to Know: Household Income Update

In rounds 2 through 5 of the NLSY97 survey, if the NLSY97 youth respondent still lived at home, one resident parent or guardian of the respondent participated in a short survey known as the Household Income Update (HIU). The HIU provided basic information about parental income from the previous year. The participating parent or guardian reported whether he or she received any income from wages, salary, commissions, or tips and gave gross-income information. The parent answered the same questions about this for his or her spouse or partner. The parent also answered questions about other sources of income (grouped together as one “other income” source), such as farm or business income, interest or dividends, inheritances, child support, or government programs.

Beginning with round 6, the Household Income Update survey was no longer conducted, because all respondents were at least 18 years old.

Household Income Update variables are found under the “Parent Background” Area of Interest and begin with “HIU.”

Errata Notice: Reversed Labels for 1992 NLSY79 Alcohol Use Variable

When data and documentation errors are discovered after a cohort’s dataset release, the information is posted at NLSinfo.org in the “Errata” subsection within the cohort’s “Other Documentation” section. Where possible, the errors are fixed on the next dataset release. The following error has been posted to the NLSY79 Errata page:

Value labels for the 1992 alcohol use variable R39148.00 (DRUG USE - # OF DAYS DRANK
ALCOHOL IN LAST MONTH) are reversed. The correct value labels and frequencies are:

- 1833: 5 LESS OFTEN THAN ONCE PER WEEK
- 2076: 4 1- 2 DAYS PER WEEK
- 902: 3 3-4 DAYS PER WEEK
- 358: 2 5-6 DAYS PER WEEK
- 174: 1 EVERY DAY
- 3034: 0 NOT AT ALL IN THE LAST 30 DAYS

These labels will be corrected in the dataset when the next version of the NLSY79 data release is posted.

### FAQs

**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:

1. ** Were the children born to the poor White oversample of NLSY79 respondents ever incorporated into the Young Adult survey?**

   Following the 1990 NLSY79 interview, none of the 1,643 members of the economically disadvantaged, non-Black/non-Hispanic NLSY79 main Youth sample were eligible for interview. As a result, the children of the mothers in this subsample were also excluded. Since the Young Adult survey did not begin until 1994, these children were never incorporated into the Young Adult survey population.

2. ** Does the NLSY79 Total Net Family Income variable include anything the respondent has received as EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit)?**

   EITC income is not figured into Total Net Family Income.

3. ** Is there a way to determine if a youth of the NLSY97 is living with his or her parents in a given year?**

   Use the household roster to decipher if a respondent is living with his or her parent(s). For the 1997 survey year, use the relationship variables HHI2_RELY.01 to HHI2_RELY.17. For subsequent survey years, use HHI_RELY. These provide the relationship information of every household member to the respondent. Using these variables, you should be able to create your own variable to determine if the respondent is living with parents.

4. ** What is the relationship between the NLS-72 and the NLS surveys?**

   The National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS-72), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, is unrelated to the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) project, which is sponsored by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, the *NLS Annotated Online Bibliography* (nlsinfo.org/bibliography) does list 13 research citations that use both the NLS and the NLS-72 in their analysis. Use the keyword phrase “NLS of H.S. Class of 1972” in the site search box to search for these citations.

5. ** Why was the NLS Young Men’s cohort data collection (1966 to 1981) discontinued so many years before the end of the NLS Young Women data collection?**

   The response rate for non-White population of the Young Men’s cohort fell below an acceptable level and analysis showed that the sample still being interviewed was no longer representative of the original sample. This forced the end of the survey. The Young Women’s survey (1968 to 2003), in contrast, had a much higher continued response rate across the board and was thus deemed viable to continue for another 22 years.

6. ** I want to track NLSY97 field interviewers over time beginning in 2002. Is that possible?**

   Yes, each interviewer is issued a permanent public identification number (INTERVIEWER_PUBID),
which stays constant for that particular interviewer across survey rounds. Several variables about interviewer characteristics are available, including year of birth, ethnicity, race, gender, highest grade completed, current or previous occupation of interviewer, number of years worked as an interviewer, and more. To access these interviewer variables, search the prefix “INTERVIEWER_” in the Question Name search in www.nlsinfo.org/investigator.

7. I’m hoping to determine if any NLSY79 Young Adult respondents have adopted children. What variable do I use?

Young Adult respondents are not asked explicitly about adopting children, but if adopted children are in the household, they would be reported as part of the household record. (See “YA HOUSEHOLD RECORD” Area of Interest in NLS Investigator, www.nlsinfo.org/investigator.) Up through 2008, the relationship codes in the Household Record had combined categories for “adopted or stepson” and “adopted or stepdaughter.” Beginning in 2010, adopted children and stepchildren were made into two separate categories.

8. In the NLS Investigator codebook, what is the difference between the -4 and -5 designations?

If a case is assigned a “-5,” it means the respondent was not interviewed for that particular survey year. For each survey year following the base survey year, a certain number of respondents are not interviewed, for a variety of reasons. These cases are assigned the code -5.

If a case is assigned a “-4” code for a particular variable, the respondent was interviewed but was not asked a particular question because he or she did not meet some criterion (age, employment status, gender, etc.). This is called a “valid skip.”

Other assigned negative values found in the codebook include the -1 code (respondent refused to answer the question) and the -2 code (respondent answered “don’t know” to the question). □

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.)


von Hippel, Paul and Jamie L. Lynch. “Why are Educated Adults Slim—Causation or Selection?” *Social Science and Medicine* 105 (March 2014): 131–139. [NLSY97]

Weiss, Felix and Mirte M. M. Scholten. “Gender Differences in the Influence of Parental Class on Young Adults’ Participation in Postsecondary Education in the US.” *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 38, 2 (March 2014): 182–199. [NLSY79]


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**NLS Contact Information**

*NLS News* is a quarterly newsletter that provides information about changes in labor market activities and other significant events that occur in the lives of several groups of men and women over time. Also, it includes information about new data releases, completed NLS research, and other information of interest to researchers. *NLS News* is available at [http://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsnews.htm](http://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsnews.htm).

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