NLSY79 round-25 data released

The main-file and work-history data release for round 25 of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) is now available to researchers.

This latest survey round contains information collected from 7,301 members of the NLSY79 cohort, or approximately 80 percent of the eligible respondents. The round-25 release includes data from the 2012 interview of the cohort, as well as all public data collected during the previous 24 interviews of the cohort. From 1979 through 1994, NLSY79 respondents were interviewed annually; since 1994, they have been interviewed every other year. The 1979–2012 dataset includes more than 160,000 variables.

The work-history data consist of all the created variables that track the respondents’ employment status from 1978 through the most recent interview date. The “Work History” areas of interest in the round-25 data release contain information on each respondent’s labor force status (including any military experience) during each week since January 1, 1978. Also in the release are information on the usual number of hours the respondent worked each week at all jobs and any additional information for a respondent who worked for more than one employer simultaneously in any week. In addition, the dataset contains the starting and stopping dates of the jobs and the usual number of hours the respondent worked for each employer (up to five employers) during the survey period. Included as well are the rate of pay and information on the occupation, industry, and class of the worker (e.g., government worker, privately employed in a for-profit company, self-employed). Finally, dates of active military service and gaps in employment are provided.

The dataset contains constructed variables summarizing various aspects of respondents’ labor force participation, both during the previous calendar year and during the period since the last interview. Among these variables are the number of weeks spent at work, the number of weeks spent unemployed or out of the labor force, and the number of hours worked. In addition, variables that summarize respondents’ lifetime experiences in the labor force, such as the total number of jobs held, have been created.

Round-25 questionnaire content

The round-25 questionnaire is similar to those used in previous rounds. Each NLSY79 respondent answers questions about his or her labor force behavior, educational attainment, training, income, health, insurance coverage, and marital and fertility histories.

The Mother Supplement questions, found in the Fertility section, report on the schooling, health, behavior problems, motor and social development, temperament, and home environment of each biological...
child under age 15 in the household. In addition, several short series of questions for Young Adult children 15 to 18 years old are contained in the Mother Supplement. These questions pertain to school attendance, general health and, where necessary, parental permission to interview those under 18.

A cognition battery was added to the round-22 questionnaire in 2006, to be administered to two birth-year cohorts at a time. Those NLSY79 respondents born in 1957/1958 received the cognition questions in the 2006 interview, 1959/1960 cohorts received them in 2008, 1961/1962 cohorts received them in 2010, and 1963/1964 cohorts received them in the 2012 interview. This series of questions asks respondents to rate their memory and administers other short cognitive exercises. The cognition measures also can be found in the Health and Retirement Study (http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/), another large-scale longitudinal survey.

The round-25 NLSY79 questionnaire included some changes, outlined next.

**Additions to the round-25 survey**

NLSY79 respondents answered a new retrospective series of childhood health and adversity (see question titles beginning with CHILDHOOD HEALTH). The series includes the following questions:

- “Consider your health when you were growing up, from birth to age 17. Would you say your health during that time was excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?”

- “From birth to age 17, did you ever have a hospital stay lasting at least two weeks?”

- “[Aside from the hospitalization that you just reported], from birth to age 17 were you ever confined to bed or home for four or more weeks because of a health condition?”

- “Before age 18, did you live with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal?”

- “Before age 18, did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic?”

- “Before age 18, how often did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick or physically harm you in any way? Do not include spanking. Would you say never, once, or more than once?”

- “Before age 18, how much parental love and affection did you receive growing up? Would you say a great deal, quite a lot, a little, or none at all?”

Respondents also answered retrospective questions about any severe head injuries received that required medical attention or involved the loss of consciousness, the number of times it happened, the age of their most recent head injury that led to loss of consciousness, how long they were unconscious, and whether the head injury affected their sense of smell (see Q11-HEADINJ).

NLSY79 respondents in round 25 received several new questions about finances. They rated how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following two statements:

- “I am good at dealing with day-to-day financial matters, such as checking accounts, credit and debit cards, and tracking expenses.”

- “I regularly keep up with economic and financial news.”

Respondents then demonstrated their financial literacy by answering the following questions:

- “On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means very low and 7 means very high, how would you assess your overall financial knowledge?”

- “Do you think that the following statement is true or false? Buying a single company stock usually provides a safer return than a stock mutual fund.”

- “Suppose you had $100 in a savings account and the interest rate was 2 percent per year. After 5 years, how much do you think you would have in the
account if you left the money to grow: more than $102, exactly $102, or less than $102?”

• “Imagine that the interest rate on your savings account was 1% per year and inflation was 2% per year. After 1 year, would you be able to buy more than, exactly the same as, or less than today with the money in this account?”

• “If interest rates rise, what will typically happen to bond prices?”

• “Do you think that the following statement is true or false? A 15-year mortgage typically requires higher monthly payments than a 30-year mortgage, but the total interest paid over the life of the loan will be less.”

• Respondents also indicated if they had set aside emergency or rainy day funds covering expenses for 3 months.

• The new financial questions can be found by searching the question name prefix FIN_LIT in NLS Investigator.

• If NLSY79 respondents had owned a business but had closed or sold that business, they answered the following new questions related to that event (see question name prefix SES-BUSOWN):

  • “After you [sold/closed] your business, paying off the business’s debts and selling your business’s assets, did you come away with some money after liquidation, or did you have to put some of your personal funds into the business in order to shut it down?”

  • “Are you entitled to any future income, such as royalties, profit sharing, or future payments from selling this business?”

  • “Was there some property you had in the business that you did not sell or dispose of, but kept for yourself?”

• “How much would you say the property you kept was worth?”

• “Did you have a new job lined up before you closed your business?”

New followup questions about religion help pinpoint a respondent’s type of religion if it was not on the interviewer’s pick list or not obvious. Respondents answered questions such as “Would that be a Christian church?” “Would you consider that a Protestant church?” “Just to clarify, what specific denomination is that, if any?” “Do you consider yourself Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or none of these?” See the variable name prefix R_REL. These same clarification questions were also asked about the spouse’s religion.

The round-25 dataset also includes the return of an extensive assets section, generally asked every other survey round (last asked in round 23). This section includes questions about checking/savings accounts, CDs/bonds/mutual funds, cash-value life insurance policies, stocks, retirement plans, motor vehicle ownership and debt, rent subsidies, real estate assets and debts, farm assets and debts, business assets and debts, collections, and personal property.

Obtaining NLSY79 data

The NLSY79 main-file data, Child and Young Adult data, and supporting documentation, along with data and documentation from the other NLS cohorts, can be accessed free of charge through the NLS Investigator at www.nlsinfo.org/investigator. Round-25 NLSY79 geocode-data variables, which provide information on each respondent’s county of residence, are made available shortly after the main-file data release. Geocode variables have restricted access and come on a geocode CD; researchers interested in obtaining the CD must complete an accessing agreement. For more details on the geocode release, go to www.bls.gov/nls/geocodeapp.htm or contact NLS User Services at usersvc@chrr.osu.edu.
NLSY97 postsecondary transcript data files now available

A data release of NLSY97 Postsecondary Transcript data is now available for public use. These data include a youth-level file with selected transcript-related data, as well as course- and term-level files with variables pertaining to course enrollment. Institutions are identified using the nondisclosive NEWSCH_PUBID values found in the main survey data collected about postsecondary enrollment. These IDs are youth-specific but not meaningful across youths.

These administrative data files supplement extensive financial and enrollment-related data collected in the main youth interview about college participation. (High school transcript data are also available for this cohort in NLS Investigator under the Variable Type TRANSSCRIPT SURVEY). The postsecondary transcript data were collected by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago under a grant from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to Professor Chandra Muller at the University of Texas at Austin.

A Stata data file and associated documentation are available as a zip file on the www.NLSinfo.org website. (See the Errata section of the NLSY97 Cohort’s Other Documentation area: https://www.nlsinfo.org/content/cohorts/nlsy97/other-documentation/errata/addendum-nlsy97-post-secondary-transcript-data) These data are expected to be available for download via NLS Investigator in early 2015.

NLSY97 arrest and incarceration variables updated for rounds 14 and 15 The NLSY97 arrest and incarceration event history variables now include survey information from all released rounds, having been recently updated to include the survey information from rounds 14 and 15.

These arrays consist of created monthly variables that document the number of arrests and incarcerations in each month, starting at the respondent’s 12th birthday. Using these arrays, researchers can extract the status of a respondent at a point in time or over time. Also updated are the arrest and incarceration summary datasets. These summary measures include first arrest data, total number of arrests, first entry date into incarceration, total number of spells, age at first incarceration, length of first incarceration and longest incarceration, as well as whether respondent was currently incarcerated at date of last interview.

The updated data are available as zip files on the www.NLSinfo.org website. (See the Errata section of the NLSY97 Cohort’s Other Documentation area).
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**NLS tutorials: how to access and analyze the data**

Users seeking guidance on some of the common challenges of the NLS data may find answers in the online tutorials www.nlsinfo.org/content/getting-started/intro-to-the-nls/tutorials. Each tutorial provides step-by-step details as well as tips to researchers on topics such as linking NLSY79 mothers to their children and linking roster items across rounds. The following is a brief description of each tutorial on the following topics:

- **Variable search using the NLS investigator** describes common search issues and tips for resolving them. It provides a systematic approach to looking for information on a specific research topic.
- **Linking roster items across rounds** explains how to find the same member of the respondent’s household across different NLSY97 survey rounds. The goal is to link household roster items across survey rounds using unique household member ID codes. Users learn how to find the household roster variables, extract selected roster data, and compare unique ID (UID) codes across rounds.
- **Matching cohabitating partners to their characteristics in the NLSY97** assists users in linking a respondent’s cohabiting partner to the partner’s characteristics using information from the created event history arrays, household and nonresident rosters, and the partner rosters. The tutorial uses the example of finding the age of the NLSY97 respondent’s first cohabiting partner. Users learn how to find and tag the relevant variables, extract selected variables, find the partner ID for the first partner, split the partner ID into round and loop number, locate the partner on the partner roster, and link partner to his/her age.
- **Constructing comparable samples across the NLSY79 and NLSY97** walks through the basic steps

**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 has been completed, with a round-16 data release scheduled for late 2015. The next data collection round (round 17) is scheduled to begin in 2015.
- **NLSY79 Main Survey.** Data from rounds 1 through 25 of the NLSY79 are now available. (See related article in this issue of the newsletter.) These data were collected in the survey years between 1979 and 2012. (Note one exception: the new cumulative Employer History roster is currently available for survey years 1979-2010. Updates incorporating 2012 data will be available in early 2015.) Round 26 of the NLSY79 is now in the field and will continue through the first part of 2015.
- **NLSY79 Child Survey and NLSY79 Young Adult Survey.** Both of these surveys are fielded during approximately the same time frame as the main NLSY79 survey. The latest Young Adult data collection effort is now taking place, with the next NLSY79 Child data collection round to begin in early 2015. 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 scheduled for late 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, 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).
of constructing parallel samples for research projects that use both the NLSY79 and the NLSY97 cohorts. The tutorial uses the specific example of constructing work status at age 20 for both samples. Users learn how to select the samples for analysis, determine the age and interview years needed for the analysis, create tagsets of variables to define work status at age 20 for both cohort datasets, and construct the work status variable for both samples.

- **Intergenerational links: NLSY79 mothers and their children** explains the general logic to link mothers and children of any age covered in the Children of the NLSY79. The tutorial uses the specific example of mothers and young adult daughters.

Still needing assistance after studying the tutorials? Users are always welcome to contact NLS User Services at usersvc@chrr.osu.edu.

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**Did you know? NLS datasets contain info on work supervisors**

Several NLS datasets include variables about the characteristics of a respondent's work supervisor, thus offering a glimpse into the dynamics of a respondent's daily work world.

**NLSY97 dataset:** In rounds 1 through 12, the NLSY97 respondents provided their supervisor's gender, race, and age (or estimated age) for each employer. In rounds 5-12, respondents also answered a question about the supervisor's Hispanic/Latino/Spanish ethnicity.

**NLSY79 dataset:** Respondents indicated their supervisor's gender in select years up through 1998. Respondents were asked to rate the accuracy of the statement “Your supervisor is competent in doing the job” in 1979-1982 and in 1998. In 1990, respondents indicated the amount of education their immediate supervisor had and the best explanation for their supervisor getting the supervisory position (worked his/her way up through the ranks, hired in from outside company, etc.). In 1990, 1996, and 1998, information was gathered on the total number of employees the supervisor oversaw; the gender count of those employees was in 1996 and 1998.

**NLSY Young Adult dataset:** The Young Adult cohort dataset had one supervisor characteristic variable, rating the accuracy of the “Your supervisor is/was competent in doing the job” statement (in survey years 1994, 1996 and 1998).

**Mature Women and Young Women datasets:** Both women cohort datasets include variables about the supervisor's gender, the number of other subordinates the supervisor has, and the gender of those subordinates. (See survey years 1995-2003.) In 1995, respondents also indicated how closely their supervisor supervised their work, whether their supervisor had a supervisor, and the gender of that supervisor. The Young Women respondents in 1980 also rated the competency of their supervisor.

**Young Men and Older Men datasets:** The Young Men had one question about supervisors: rating their supervisor's competency. (See survey years 1978 and 1981.) The Older Men's dataset did not include questions about supervisors.

To locate these variables in NLS Investigator (www.nlsinfo.org/investigator), use “supervisor” as the Word in Title search criteria.

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**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. Is there an NLSY97 variable that details a participant’s type of college (liberal arts, research, etc.)?

The NLSY97 cohort’s restricted-access geocode dataset contains the college identifier UNITID. This identifier comes from the National Center for Education Statistics as part of their IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) dataset. (See www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/) This college identifier may provide enough information to allow users to classify post-secondary schools. To read more about obtaining access to geocode datasets and to download an application, go to http://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsfaqs.htm#anch25.

2. As part of my research, I’m using the interviewer’s observations part of the HOME (Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment) questions, found in the NLSY79 Child interview. Can you tell me how the interviewer is trained/instructed before answering these questions? For example, does she/he get prior instruction on how to decide “if the mother’s voice conveyed positive feeling about the child”?

NLSY79 Child-trained interviewers are lay professionals who have gone through in-person training on all aspects of the survey. They receive definitions of the HOME observations, prepared by Robert Bradley, the designer of the HOME scales, which they read and consult when coding specific home environments. Users can find additional information on training procedures in the NLSY79 Child/Young Adult User’s Guide (www.nlsinfo.org/content/cohorts/nlsy79-children/intro-to-the-sample/interview-methods).

3. Do any of the NLSY datasets include variables about suicide ideation?

The 2012 NLSY79 Young Adult cohort dataset includes two variables about suicide ideation. Respondents first answer the question “Have you ever seriously considered attempting suicide?” If respondents answer yes, they receive the followup question, “Have you seriously considered suicide during the last 12 months?” Young Adult respondents also answer a question about living with anyone “who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal” when they were growing up.

4. According to the documentation I’ve read, the NLSY79 is an “area sample.” What does this mean?

The NLSY79 cohort is an area probability sample, meaning areas with greater population will likely have a higher proportion of respondents. There was no attempt to sample respondents from every state. For more information about the sample design, researchers can consult the NLSY79 User’s Guide (www.nlsinfo.org/content/cohorts/nlsy79/intro-to-the-sample). Detailed information can be found in the Technical Sampling Report, which can be downloaded at www.nlsinfo.org/sites/nlsinfo.org/files/attachments/130212/NLSY79%20Tech%20Samp%20Rpt.pdf.

5. In the NLSY97 employment status variable, (EMP_STATUS), what is the difference between “unemployed” versus “out of the labor force?”

For the EMP_STATUS variable, “unemployed” means not associated with an employer and looking for work, while “out of the labor force” means not associated with an employer and not looking for work. The distinction between the two is whether the respondent is searching for a job or not. Examples of being out of the labor force could be a disabled person or a stay-at-home parent.

6. Are sexual orientation questions included in the NLSY97?

Respondents are never asked specifically to identify their sexual orientation. From round 1 (1997) through round 8 (2004), the NLSY97 surveys specifically used the words “of the opposite sex” regarding partner and spousal relationships, although it would have been possible for respondents to list a same-sex partner on the household roster. In round 6 (2002), respondents began answering questions about the gender of their dating and sexual partners. Beginning in round 9 (2005), the language regarding “opposite sex” was dropped from the questions collecting information
on partners and spouses, and collection began on the gender of partners and spouses if this information had not already been recorded in the household section.

7. How are NLSY interviewers assigned to respondents? Looking at the data, the assignments do not seem to be random. For example, Black respondents are more likely to be matched with Black interviewers. Similarly, Hispanic respondents appear more likely to be matched with Hispanic interviewers.

Overall, the initial assignment of cases is based on location of the interviewer in relation to the respondents, regardless of any characteristics of the interviewers or respondents themselves. Thus, interviewers might inadvertently be of the same demographic background as the respondent because they live near each other.

In some situations, Spanish-speaking interviewers (most of whom are of Hispanic background) are matched with Spanish-speaking respondents, as there are a few respondents who prefer to complete the NLS questionnaire in Spanish within a given round. Also, in some urban areas, a Black or Hispanic interviewer might be used in certain neighborhoods to make respondents and gatekeepers feel more at ease, but this is not done when assessing overall case assignments.

Completed NLS Research

The following is a list 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.)


Buckles, Kasey S. and Shawna Kolk. “Prenatal Investments, Breastfeeding, and Birth Order.” Social Science and Medicine 118 (October 2014): 66-70. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79]


Deardorff, Julianna, Barbara Abrams, J. Paul Ekwaru, and David Rehkopf. “Socioeconomic Status and Age at Menarche: An Examination of Multiple Indicators in an Ethnically Diverse Cohort.” Annals of Epidemiology 24, 10 (October 2014): 727-733. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]

Dembe, Allard E., Xiaoxi Yao, Thomas Wickizer, Abigail Shoben, and Xiwen Sue Dong. “Using O*NET to Estimate the Association Between Work Exposures and Chronic Diseases.” American Journal of Industrial Medicine 57, 9 (September 2014): 1022-1031. [NLSY79]

and Proxy Reports Differ in their Relationships with Covariates?” *Quality of Life Research* 23, 7 (September 2014): 1953-1965. [NLSY97]


Hanson, Karla L., Jeffery Sobal, and Francoise M. Vermeylen. “Social Selection and Social Causation in Marriage and Health: Longitudinal Evidence of Body Weight Change.” *Marriage and Family Review* 50, 5 (July 2014): 373-394. [NLSY79]


Kirchner, EmmaLeigh E. and George E. Higgins. “Self-Control and Racial Disparities in Delinquency: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach.” *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 39, 3 (September 2014): 436-449. [Children of the NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult]


Manlove, Jennifer S., Kate Welti, Elizabeth Wildsmith, and Megan C. Barry. “Relationship Types and Contraceptive Use Within Young Adult Dating Relationships.” *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 46, 1 (March 2014): 41-50. [NLSY97]


McNamee, Catherine, Paul R. Amato, and Valarie King. “Nonresident Father Involvement with Children and Divorced Women’s Likelihood of Remarriage.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 76, 4 (August 2014): 862-874. [NLSY79]


