

What is the Monitoring the Future project?

Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth (MTF) began in 1975 as a repeated annual survey on values, attitudes, and lifestyle orientations of high school seniors in the U.S. The most recent data represent the experiences of students in 2008. Each year, a nationally representative sample of 12th graders completes the survey, producing 30 years of annual snapshots of high school seniors. In 2008, about 14,600 12th graders from 130 high schools were surveyed. Additionally, a subset of each annual sample is re-interviewed biannually for twelve years and every five years thereafter producing longitudinal data. MTF also examines the experiences of *young* adolescents. Since 1991, MTF has included nationally representative samples of 8th through 10th graders. In 2008, 16,300 8th graders and 15,500 10th graders participated.

What can I study using MTF?

Participants are randomly assigned to complete one of several questionnaires. Questions about demographics and drug use are included in every questionnaire (i.e., the core questions). However, questions on topics such as attitudes toward education, work and leisure activities, interpersonal relationships, happiness, expectations of marriage and childbearing, and attitudes toward gender roles and family formation vary based on which questionnaire form the participant is assigned. The 8th through 10th grade and the 12th grade surveys cover similar topics. A few additional topics are included in the 12th graders' questionnaires relevant to their specific life course position (e.g., attitudes toward politics and major social institutions).

The repeated cross-sectional surveys (i.e., yearly snapshots) allow family scholars to examine the views of high school seniors on marriage, cohabitation, and parenthood over a 30-year span. Approximately 12,000 high school seniors answered at least one family question in 2008. The longitudinal data reveal how individuals' values and attitudes regarding marriage and family change as they transition to adulthood.

Using the cross-sectional MTF data

The questions specific to marriage, cohabitation, and parenthood are included in different interview forms, so researchers should not merge respondents' answers from different forms. To access an MTF Data Snapshot, which shows the variable locations of key family measures, [click here](#).

MTF data for 1976-2008 are available in SAS, Stata, SPSS, and ASCII format. Codebooks for [12th graders](#) and [8th-10th graders](#) are publicly available through [Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research \(ICPSR\)](#) (Note: No membership is required to browse documentation files).

In analyzing MTF data, researchers should take into account the design effects by including the respondent sample weight (i.e., v5). Note the weight variable in the 1976-2007 data releases was slightly modified for confidentiality reasons, so the weighted frequencies shown in the codebooks versus the data are not identical. Similarly, the 2008 data release contains a weighting variable, but the codebook contains unweighted frequencies, making it possible to check the accuracy of the data.

How do I access the data?

MTF data include: (1) annual cross-sectional surveys on 12th graders, (2) panel surveys on a subset of the 12th graders, and (3) annual cross-sectional surveys on 8th through 10th graders. The two annual cross-sectional surveys are available for public use through [Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research \(ICPSR\)](#) (Note: Users must belong to member institutions to download data). The panel survey data are restricted-use only and require contacting MTF staff (MTFinfo@isr.umich.edu).

Where can I learn more about MTF?

Visit the MTF website for more information at <http://monitoringthefuture.org/>.