

What is the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997-Round 12, 2008?

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), as part of the National Longitudinal Survey (NLS) program, is designed to chronicle the transitions of U.S. youth from school to work and into adulthood. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides basic funding.

Since 1997, the NLSY97 has collected comprehensive information regarding labor market behavior and educational experiences of U.S. youth over time—currently on an annual schedule—providing researchers with information on a range of topics including: aptitude, achievement, and intelligence; education; employment; expectations, attitudes, behaviors, and time use; family background and demographic characteristics; health; income, program participation, and assets; marital history, childcare, and fertility; and training. The NLSY97 yields twelve rounds of panel data on a nationally representative sample of 8,984 youth aged 12 to 16 as of December 31, 1996 and is comprised of the following two sub-samples:

- *Cross-sectional sample* (n=6,748). Representative of youths living in the U.S. during 1997 and born between 1980 and 1984
- *Supplemental sample* (n=2,236). Designed to oversample Black and Hispanic/Latino youths living in the U.S. during 1997 and born between 1980 and 1984

The latest release of NLSY97 data—round 12—was fielded from October 2008 to May 2009 in which 7,490 respondents (83.3% of the original sample) aged 23 to 29 years were interviewed:

- *Cross-sectional sample* (n=5,560, 82.4% response rate)
- *Supplemental sample* (n=1,930, 86.3% response rate)

What's new in the NLSY97-Round 12, 2008?

The round twelve questionnaire maintained longitudinal elements from previous rounds, brought back questions asked in previous round(s) (except in round 11), and added new questions—reflecting the increasing age of the NLSY97 sample and emerging research topics such as childcare, incarceration and parole, religious beliefs, preferences and behaviors, mental health, personality, political participation, and internet activities.

The topic of childcare was expanded in round 12 by bringing back questions previously asked in rounds five and nine. The youngest female respondents—those born in 1983 or 1984—were asked about the primary care arrangements for each of their children (e.g., relative vs. non-relative care, financial assistance with care). Women in this same birth cohort—whether they had children or not—were also asked about types and availability of childcare and how much they would be willing to pay for care if they were to need it.

Multiple questions regarding incarceration and parole were added to round 12, including some related specifically to respondents' families. Currently and formerly incarcerated respondents were asked to report on contact with families and friends while incarcerated (type and frequency) and the consequences of their incarceration experiences (e.g., loss of child custody). Those respondents who had previously been incarcerated were asked about post incarceration housing (e.g., if allowed to stay with friends or family).

Respondents were also asked about their religious preferences, beliefs, and behaviors. Specifically, respondents reported how important their religious faith was in shaping their daily lives, and among Christians, whether they considered themselves born-again or evangelical. In

addition, information regarding the religious affiliation of respondents' spouses and partners was collected.

Round 12 also marked the return of the five-item version of the Mental Health Inventory. Respondents were asked to rate their moods in the month prior to the interview. This Inventory was coupled with the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI)—a new addition. Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed/disagreed with how a series of paired personality traits applied to them and their overall satisfaction with life.

What does the NLSY97-Round 12, 2008 offer family scholars?

The NLSY97-Round 12, 2008 is a rich resource for studies of marriage and the family—in both the topical areas covered and its survey design—providing researchers with analytical opportunities not available with other nationally representative data. Specific to marriage and the family, the data provide researchers with information on topics such as: attitudes, behaviors, and time use; family background and demographic characteristics; income, program participation, and assets; and marital history, childcare, and fertility.

Part of the survey design of the NLSY97 is the maintenance of multiple rosters, including but not limited to: a household roster, a non-resident roster, a partner roster, and a child roster. The construction of the rosters was based on a household informant (HHI) survey initiated prior to the round one youth survey. The information was validated by the youth respondent's parent/parent-figure in the round one parent survey and validated again by the youth respondent. Respondents are asked to report on multiple characteristics of individuals on the rosters [e.g., relationship to respondent (HHI, parent, and youth), sex, marital status], and their information is updated by the youth respondent at each survey round. Based on their relationship to the respondent, the individuals are placed on other rosters and further details are asked. For example, spouses and partners are placed on a partner roster, assigned a unique ID, and additional information is gathered (e.g., their relationship quality with the respondent, start and stop dates of the relationships with the respondent, and children (those with and without respondent)). Because the NLSY97 collects and maintains a resident *and* non-resident roster, users are able to track the movements of related and non-related individuals in and out of respondents' households across all 12 rounds.

Another advantage to the survey design of the NLSY97 is that respondents are asked to report on relationship transitions *between* interviews. The NLSY97 staff creates and maintains three event-history arrays allowing researchers to track the changes in a respondent's (1) marital and (2) cohabitation status in a continuous month scheme (beginning in the month the respondent turned 14 and ending in the month they were last interviewed). The third provided array is a partner link allowing researchers to connect characteristics of partners with different marital and cohabitation episodes. For information on linking the first cohabiting partner to their respected characteristics, click [here](#).

The NLSY97 also provides other created variables. For instance, there are variables indicating current marital status, total number of marriages, total number of cohabiting relationships, as well as beginning and ending dates of first marriages and cohabitations. With respect to each biological child of the respondent, there are variables indicating residential status of child, birth (and death) dates, and number of biological children ever born who reside (and don't reside) in the respondent's household. The NLSY97 provides many other measures related to marriage and the family that are too numerous to list here. For more information, see the NLSY97 documentation and website (multiple links below).

Using NLSY97-Round 12, 2008 Data

Documentation for the [NLSY97](#) is publically available through the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) webpage and via the [NLS Investigator](#)—a web-based electronic codebook and data extraction program. The following resources are available:

- [NLSY97 User's Guide](#)
- [NLSY97 Topical Guide](#)
- [NLSY97 Questionnaires](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page)

In analyzing NLSY97 data, researchers should take into account the complex sampling methods used. The NLS Investigator should be used to access cross-sectional respondent weights and to generate the custom longitudinal respondent weights (log into the NLS Investigator, and click the Custom Weight link found at the top of the page). Other weights used to correct for complex sampling methods (PSU and strata variables) are included in the NLSY97 Geocode datafile (see below). More information can be found in the NLSY97 User's Guide, [Sample Weights & Design Effects](#) and by clicking [here](#).

NLSY97 Data Resources Provided by the National Center for Family & Marriage Research

The National Center for Family & Marriage Research (NCFMR) currently provides two data products to aid NLSY97 data users:

- [Measures Snapshots](#)—detailed summaries of family measures (e.g., couple relationship quality and family structure).
- Question Crosswalks (*coming soon*)—detailed summaries of how marriage and family questions are asked across large, national data sets.

These data products can help researchers efficiently identify appropriate data sets and measures relevant to their specific projects related to families.

How do I access the data?

All 12 rounds of the NLSY97 are publically available via the [NLS Investigator](#), allowing users to search, select, save, analyze, and download data specific to their individual project needs (because of its large size, it is recommended that you do not download the entire NLSY97 dataset). Data are available in SAS, SPSS, Stata, and comma-delimited datafile formats.

Restricted-use NLSY97 data available by contractual agreement only:

[Confidential NLSY Geocode Data](#)—available to researchers in the U.S. **only**. Upon approval, researchers may use these datafiles at their own facilities. For application document and information, click [here](#).

NLSY Zip Code and Census tract files are available for use at the BLS National Office in Washington, DC **only**. These files include the geocode data. Click [here](#) to access the information.

Where can I learn more about the NLSY97-Round 12, 2008 data?

For more information on the NLSY97, visit the main webpage at the following link: <http://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsy97.htm>.