



YOUR STORY, YOUR SURVEY

NLSY 97

Dear NLSY97 Respondent,

Welcome to the 21st Round of the NLSY97!

Since you were first interviewed, you have transitioned from school to work and into adulthood. Over the years, you have updated us about your employment, schooling, marriages, children, health, and much more. We are always appreciative of your participation in the NLSY97 survey.

As you approach middle age, many people are especially busy juggling both child and elder care responsibilities. Others may be building their careers including pursuing additional education and training. Still others are buying homes or moving to a new neighborhood. Whatever your experience, now at the start of a new round of interviews, we hope you will grant us the privilege of speaking with you and sharing your unique story to ensure that the NLSY97 continues to be successful at documenting the lives of Americans as they age and change over time.

While most U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) surveys are cross sectional, providing a “snapshot” at one point in time of measures such as the unemployment rate (Employment Situation), labor productivity and output (Productivity and Costs), or the price change of consumer goods and services (Consumer Price Index), a longitudinal survey like the NLSY97 follows the same people over time. At each interview, we ask you about your life and changes since your last interview. With this information we are able to create histories that allow researchers to answer questions about long-term labor market outcomes such as the number of jobs people hold in a lifetime, earnings growth at different stages in workers’ careers, and how events early in life have affected success at middle age. In the future, researchers will be able to study how events at middle age will affect outcomes at later points in life.

The events in your life combined with the experiences of other NLSY97 respondents form a portrait of your generation and we invite you visit our NLS bibliography page: www.nlsbibliography.org. Here you will find studies on topics such as employment, earnings, education and training, health, family, and so much more. In fact, over 1,300 journal articles, Ph.D. dissertations, and book chapters have been written using information from the NLSY97. These studies affect public policies in many ways. Policymakers often use them directly in planning programs, and news organizations often report their main findings to the general public. Increased awareness of issues facing your generation then becomes a catalyst for improvement. And as the NLSY97 is one of BLS’ family of surveys, we also invite you to browse the BLS website for information about labor market survey topics of interest: www.bls.gov.

Thank you again for being a part of the NLSY97, we look forward to talking to you soon...

Sincerely,

Keenan Dworak-Fisher

Director, National Longitudinal Surveys
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?

Thanks to your help, policymakers and researchers will have a better understanding of the work experiences, family characteristics, health, financial status, and other important information about the lives of people in your generation. This is a voluntary study, and there are no penalties for not participating or not answering all the questions. However, missing responses make it more difficult to understand the issues that concern people in your community and across the country. Your answers represent the experiences of hundreds of other people your age. We hope we can count on your participation again this time.

WHO AUTHORIZES THIS STUDY?

The sponsor of the study is the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The study is authorized under Title 29, Section 2, of the United States Code. The CHRR at The Ohio State University and NORC at the University of Chicago conduct this study under a contract with the Department of Labor. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has approved the questionnaire and has assigned 1220-0157 as the study's control number. This control number expires on X/XX/2026. Without OMB approval and this number, we would not be able to conduct this study.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL THE INTERVIEW TAKE?

Based on preliminary tests, we expect the average interview to take about 73 minutes. Your interview may be somewhat shorter or longer depending on your circumstances. If you have any comments regarding this study or recommendations for reducing its length, send them to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Longitudinal Surveys, at BLS_PRA_Public@bls.gov.

WHO SEES MY ANSWERS?

We want to reassure you that your confidentiality is protected by law. In accordance with the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act, the Privacy Act, and other applicable Federal laws, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, its employees and agents, will, to the full extent permitted by law, use the information you provide for statistical purposes only, will hold your responses in confidence, and will not disclose them in identifiable form without your informed consent. All the employees who work on the survey at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and its contractors must sign a document agreeing to protect the confidentiality of your data. In fact, only a few people have access to information about your identity because they need that information to carry out their job duties.

Some of your answers will be made available to researchers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other government agencies, universities, and private research organizations through publicly available data files. These publicly available files contain no personal identifiers, such as names, addresses, Social Security numbers, and places of work, and exclude any information about the states, counties, metropolitan areas, and other, more detailed geographic locations in which survey participants live, making it much more difficult to figure out the identities of participants. Some researchers are granted special access to data files that include geographic information, but only after those researchers go through a thorough application process at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those authorized researchers must sign a written agreement making them official agents of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and requiring them to protect the confidentiality of survey participants. Those researchers are never provided with the personal identities of participants. The National Archives and Records Administration and the General Services Administration may receive copies of survey data and materials because those agencies are responsible for storing the Nation's historical documents.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

To learn more about the survey, visit: www.bls.gov/nls. To search for articles, reports, and other research based on the National Longitudinal Surveys, visit: www.nlsbibliography.org.