

**Bureau of Labor Statistics Report to the Appropriations Committees on a
New Cohort to the National Longitudinal Surveys
March 2023**

Progress Report and Updated Plan for Design (Fiscal Years 2021 to 2025)

The following report provides an update on Bureau of Labor Statistics' investment into the planning, development, and implementation of a new National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) cohort, in response to the Statement of Managers accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub.L. 117-328). The referenced Joint Explanatory Statement directed the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as follows:

BLS shall complete all necessary work in fiscal year 2023 for the new cohort that was outlined in its five-year plan and shall not use any allocated resources for NLSY in this agreement for any other purpose. Further, BLS is directed to support the continued fielding of the NLSY79 and NLSY97 cohorts and shall refrain from implementing any reductions to either survey.

Within 90 days of enactment of this Act, BLS shall brief the Committees on its plans for executing these directives and carrying out its implementation of the new NLSY cohort five-year plan without delay.

This report provides information on the actions BLS has taken to carry out elements of its plan in FY 2021, FY 2022, and early FY 2023, and it outlines the work planned for the remainder of FY 2023. Based on the lessons learned during implementation to date, this report presents revisions to the prior five-year plan and briefly discusses the work to be done in the first years of data collection (FY 2026 and FY 2027). Background on the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) and overall approach to planning and development can be found in the previous reports.¹

FY 2023 Plans for NLSY79 and NLSY97 Cohorts

In FY 2023, BLS will continue data collection of round 30 of the NLSY79 as well as begin data collection of round 21 of the NLSY97. BLS also will engage in the necessary contracting activities to support the subsequent rounds for each cohort.

New Cohort Activities between FY 2021 and FY 2023 Quarters 1 and 2

NLS has conducted extensive planning and consultation activities with its stakeholders and expert advisors to maximize the value of the new cohort to data users and ensure that it employs modern best practices in producing it. These preparations began in FY 2020 as NLS consulted with members of the NLS Technical Review Committee and conducted a review of other large

¹ The 2020 report can be found at <https://www.bls.gov/bls/congressional-reports/report-to-the-appropriations-committees-on-a-new-cohort-to-the-national-longitudinal-surveys.pdf> and the 2021 report is at <https://www.bls.gov/bls/congressional-reports/bls-report-to-congress-on-a-new-cohort-to-the-national-longitudinal-surveys-march-2021.pdf>

scale, longitudinal social surveys that launched significant redesign efforts or new waves in the last 15 years. This work continued in FY 2021 and FY 2022 according to the 5-year plan.

Below is a summary and high-level timeline of the major activities that NLS has undertaken thus far.

CHRR at The Ohio State University/National Science Foundation New Cohort Conference (FY 2021 Quarters 1 and 2)

In October 2020, CHRR at The Ohio State University, currently NLS's prime contractor, hosted a conference entitled, "Shaping a New National Longitudinal Survey of Youth". The conference brought together academics from many disciplines, leaders from federal agencies, and independent researchers to share information about previous achievements of the NLS, identify emerging and ongoing needs for studying upcoming workforce generations, and discuss how a new cohort could meet those needs. It established a critical foundation of interest in new cohort development from which to build stakeholder engagement and provided critical directions for the shaping of the new cohort's content. CHRR documented in a report the proceedings and the input received from participants after the event. NLS has used the report as a building block for additional stakeholder outreach and as a key reference for the work of its content panels.

Sample Frame Assessment (FY 2021 Quarters 1 to 3)

In the first and second quarters, BLS subject matter experts assessed the different sample frames available for a new cohort. The NLSY79 and NLSY97 samples were selected by a third-party vendor, who employed multi-stage, area-based, stratified sampling strategies to select households from a register owned by the contractor. For the new cohort, the subject matter experts considered whether to independently sample from an address register or to work with other federal surveys to leverage their sample frames. The assessment considered several federal surveys as initial candidates for the sample frame, including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) National Household Educational Surveys (NHES) and Census's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), both on its own and in conjunction with information from the Census Bureau's Master Address File. The assessment also carefully weighed the potential efficiencies from working with another federal survey against the potential impacts on cost and data quality, including the accessibility of data when working with other federal agencies.

In June 2021, BLS subject matter experts provided a report of their findings and recommendations to senior BLS management. The report recommended against the use of existing survey sample frames due to uncertainty over feasibility, costs, and data accessibility. The subject matter experts also identified concerns with the use of existing survey sample frames and potential impacts over the course of the new cohort's expected life. Instead, the report recommended that BLS contract a private research organization to sample and screen for the new cohort.

User Outreach (FY 2021 Quarter 2 to FY 2023 Quarter 2)

NLS has used a wide array of methods to conduct outreach to its stakeholders, enabling it to anticipate emerging user needs and complement other data sources. One such method has been to host webinars and briefings with other federal agencies. Table 1 lists the agencies with which events have been conducted.

Table 1

Agency	Date of webinar
Department of Justice	May 2021
National Center for Educational Statistics	June 2021
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development	June 2021
Department of Health and Human Services	June 2021
Environmental Protection Agency	July 2022
Department of Housing and Urban Development	October 2022
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health	January 2023
National Institute on Aging	February 2023

In addition to these efforts, BLS posted a [Federal Register Notice](#) on March 7, 2022 describing several other outreach activities BLS would be conducting to collect input on a new youth cohort and requesting comments on the new youth cohort. Through its contractor, NORC at the University of Chicago, BLS conducted the following: (1) an on-line survey of the public to be accessed through the BLS website that was available from March 23, 2022, to May 3, 2022, with responses from 412 people; and (2) a series of listening sessions where subject matter experts were invited to provide input on the new youth cohort. The listening sessions were conducted from February to March 2022 and covered the following topics: Employment, Jobs, and the Future of Work; Child and Family Retrospective Information; Physical Health, Environment, and Climate; Mental Health; Innovations in International Surveys; Think Tanks, Research Organizations and Non-Profits Use of NLS Data.

Dissemination Assessment (FY 2022 Quarters 1 to 3)

As it designs the new cohort, NLS also has been evaluating alternatives for data dissemination. Potential options include development and maintenance of an in-house dissemination system and the use of a contractor-based system. Current NLS cohorts use the latter approach, but this may not be optimal for the new cohort. To evaluate the potential use of an in-house dissemination system, BLS contracted with Softek to develop a prototype for a system that would continue NLS's established record of providing a high-quality interface to help users access, manage, and analyze complex NLS datasets effectively. The prototype was completed, successfully establishing a proof-of-concept for a new design that could be maintained on the cloud. BLS continues to explore the details of implementing such a system and to consider its costs and benefits relative to contractor-based systems.

Assessment of Alternative Data Sources (FY 2022 Quarters 2 and 3)

BLS contracted with NORC to assess alternative data sources that could be integrated into a new NLS cohort to improve the accuracy of survey data collected, reduce respondent burden, or expand the scope of the survey's content. NORC reported on the relevance, accuracy, coherence, feasibility, as well as confidentiality, consent requirements, and accessibility of over twenty sources. Data for this report were gathered from a scan of publicly available sources, including secondary research using these alternative data sources. Based on the assessments in the report and NLS staff research, NLS will pursue administrative linkages to other data sources to augment data directly collected for the new cohort.

Vendor Capability Assessment (FY 2022 Quarters 3 to 4)

In June 2022, BLS issued a Request for Information (RFI) to (a) assess vendor capabilities to work with NLS in developing a new cohort/survey, and (b) solicit ideas and feedback from vendors on how best to do this work in the current regulatory and financial environment. The feedback received from vendors has provided important context to advice received from other stakeholders and subject matter experts, especially regarding expectations for sample attrition and their implications for planning the sample size of the new cohort.

Content Panels (FY 2022 Quarter 3 to FY 2023 Quarter 3)

Determining the structure and the content of the data to be collected from the new cohort requires an extensive, coordinated effort among leading subject matter experts in a wide range of disciplines. To perform this vital function, BLS contracted with NORC to convene and manage the content panels, including the production of content panel reports. The content panels were composed of experts in various subject areas, including federal representatives, to ensure that emerging ideas, best practices, and relevant examples were brought forward for consideration for the NLSY26 cohort. Experts from four broad content domains were convened with the goal of providing the BLS with an assessment of relevant and timely research issues, content and survey design recommendations, comparability to prior NLSY cohorts, and potential alternative data sources that could widen the scope of the NLSY26 cohort while decreasing respondent burden. Each panel produced a final report that summarized their recommendations and provided justification for their inclusion on the grounds of scientific value.

In FY 2022 Q3 and Q4, content panels were convened on four topics: (1) Family Background and Early Childhood Retrospectives, (2) K-12 Schooling and Cognition, (3) Health and Environmental Outcomes, and (4) Department of Defense Initiatives and Assessments.

In FY 2023 Q1 to Q3, content panels have been convened on two topics: (1) Employment, including Work Arrangements, Job Characteristics, and Early Employment and (2) Criminal Activity, Delinquency, Victimization, and Interactions with the Justice System.

New Cohort Activities Scheduled for FY 2023 Quarters 2 to 4

Culmination of Market Research (FY 2023 Quarter 2)

The activities described above have laid a solid groundwork for BLS to describe the work of developing and fielding the new cohort in its key, broad dimensions. As an additional step of preparations to bid out this work, NLS is working with the DOL Office of the Senior Procurement Executive (OSPE) to hold a “Vendor Day,” in March 2023. This will allow for greater interaction with potential vendors and discussion of technical questions regarding information technology, security, data dissemination and contract structure. Based on the information collected from the RFI and Vendor Day, NLS staff will compile a summary of findings and recommendations. This will be used as an input for developing the Request for Proposal (RFP).

RFP - Design through Wave 1 collection (FY 2023 Quarter 2 to FY 2023 Quarter 4)

After feedback received during the Vendor Day, NLS will post a final version of the RFP for solicitation, coordinate with OSPE to manage the bidding process, and select a vendor. The new contract is expected to be awarded in July 2023.

Primary Contract Design and Development Work (FY 2023 Quarter 4)

Development of the systems for the new cohort is expected to begin in earnest once the contract is signed. Activities to begin immediately include management functions including the development of staffing, communications, and data storage plans and capabilities; initial work on content and questionnaire development, sample design, and screening strategies; and establishment of a case management system.

Dissemination System Development (FY 2023 Quarter 4)

In addition to and in conjunction with the primary contract, BLS expects to continue its evaluation and development of alternatives for disseminating the new cohort’s microdata. A next step may be to pilot an application of the prototype developed in FY 2022 in a secure cloud setting. Such a pilot would inform additional decisions about the flow of data between collection and dissemination systems.

Updated Estimates for Annual Costs

The activities described above are broadly consistent with the five-year plan that BLS previously proposed for development of the new NLSY cohort with the exception of awarding a contract for survey development, which initially was scheduled for FY 2022 and now is planned for FY 2023. At this point, R1 data collection is anticipated to begin in September 2026; risks and impacts of delays will continue to be evaluated in communication with potential vendors.

Based on recent trends in response rates across a range of statistical surveys and to address data user needs from the new cohort, BLS currently estimates a sample size of 17,000 would be needed, compared to previous estimates of 15,000. The increase of 2,000 sample members

would allow for the NLSY26 survey to include additional rural sample members and to increase the size of the supplemental sample of Black and Hispanic youth to be followed as they make educational decisions and through their prime working years. The increased sample size would require additional resources to support the full implementation of the new cohort, as noted in the table below.

FY	Estimated Cost (2021 Report)	Updated Cost * (in 2023 dollars)	Major Tasks
2023	\$14,500,000	\$14,500,000	Complete advisory activities and begin survey development (sampling, survey, questionnaire, materials, dissemination, and systems work)
2024	\$14,500,000	\$14,500,000	Continue survey and systems development, sample screening, and pretest preparations
2025	\$17,000,000	\$20,500,000	Pretest fielding, survey revisions resulting from the pretest, and preparation for round 1 screening and data collection to occur in 2026
2026	\$27,000,000	\$33,000,000	Young adult and parent Round 1 (R1) data collections begin
2027	\$20,000,000	\$24,000,000	Young adult and parent data R1 collections conclude, and data processing begins; young adult R2 collection begins

* Estimated costs are based on a sample size of 17,000, an increase of 2,000 from the level used for the 2021 estimate, and have been updated to 2023 dollars using the Employment Cost Index.

The cost estimates are preliminary and will continue to be refined as FY 2023 contracting and the subsequent planning and development activities continue. In addition to reflecting estimated cost increases to account for the larger sample size, outyear contractual estimates also are adjusted using the Employment Cost Index to account for cost increases since the prior report. At this time, BLS anticipates that the ongoing annual cost after the first year of collection will be about \$24 million.