

# Getting higher education data from common sources

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There are many places you can find higher education data. Below are a few publicly-available sources with instructions on how to find and download data sets to use in your research. This list is by no means complete, but should give you a general idea of what's available.

## NCES Surveys

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is part of the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES). NCES offers a large number of resources for researchers interested in higher education.



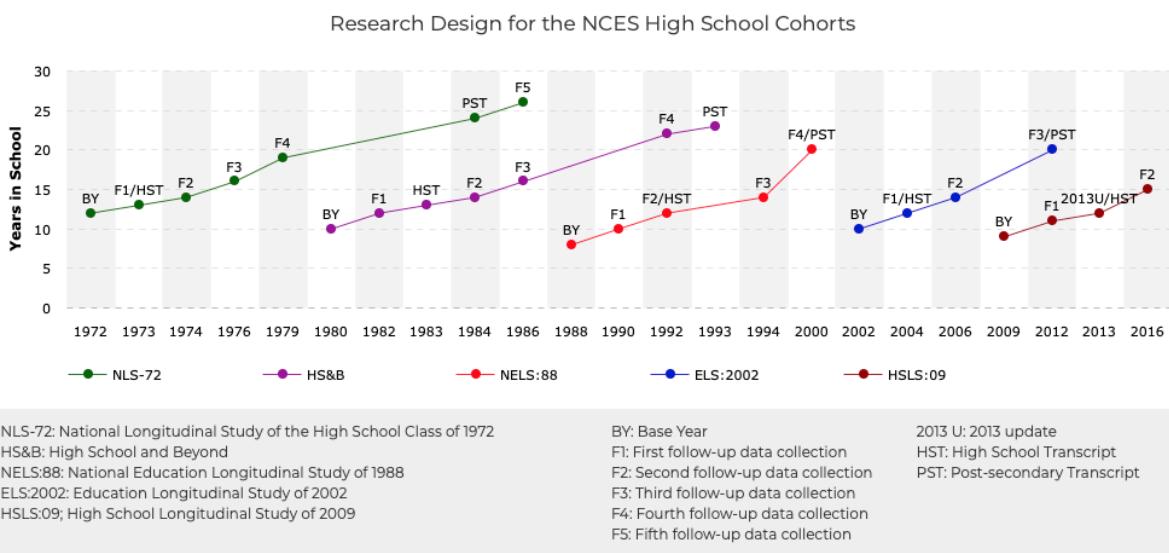
The screenshot shows the NCES website homepage. At the top, there is a banner for the "Digest of Education Statistics" featuring a photo of students raising their hands. Below the banner, the NCES logo and the text "National Center for Education Statistics" are visible. A navigation menu includes links for "About Us", "Surveys and Programs", "Publications and Products", and "Data and Tools". On the left, a "WHAT'S NEW AT NCES" section lists recent publications: "A Look at Postsecondary Certificates and Associate's Degrees in Occupational Fields of Study" (May 13), "Highlights from the PISA 2018 Financial Literacy Assessment" (May 7), "School Nurses in U.S. Public Schools" (April 30), and "A look at the postsecondary enrollment of students who took career and technical education courses" (April 26). On the right, there is a section titled "THE CONDITION OF EDUCATION" with a circular graphic of various educational icons.

Among these are longitudinal surveys that follow different cohorts of students from high school through college and beyond.

## Historical Background

HSLS:09    **ELS:2002**    NELS:88    HS&B    NLS-72

**ELS:2002** must be seen in the context of the prior NCES high school studies. ELS:2002 looks back to these past studies, upon which it builds and to which its findings will be compared. At the same time, it uniquely enhances the accomplishments of its predecessors by updating the content of the survey and extending the time line to a new decade.



Specifically, we'll go through the steps to download the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS). The good news is that the process is the same for the other surveys.

To get to the online code book you'll use to download the raw data files, head to the NCES homepage ([nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov)) and click in the following order: 1. *Menu* 1. *Data & Tools* 1. *Downloads Microdata/Raw Data* 1. *EDAT*

The screenshot shows the NCES homepage with a dark header. The header includes the 'IES > NCES' logo, the text 'National Center for Education Statistics', a 'MENU' button, a search bar, and a 'Co...' button. A red box labeled '(1)' highlights the 'MENU' button. A red box labeled '(2)' highlights the 'Data & Tools' link in the main navigation menu. A red box labeled '(3)' highlights the 'Surveys & Programs' link. A red box labeled '(4)' highlights the 'EDAT' link under the 'Downloads Microdata/Raw Data' section.

#### WHAT'S NEW AT NCES

- MAY 13** [A Look at Postsecondary Certificates and Associate's Degrees in Occupational Fields of Study](#)  
This new set of web tables examines trends in subbaccalaureate occupational education from 2005-06 to 2016-17. [» More info](#)
- MAY 7** [Highlights from the PISA 2018 Financial Literacy Assessment](#)  
This web-based report presents the 2018 results of the PISA financial literacy assessment. [» More info](#)
- APR 30** [School Nurses in U.S. Public Schools](#)  
This Data Point describes the presence of school nurses in public schools for the 2007-08, 2011-12, and 2015-16 school years, and by selected school characteristics for the 2015-16 school year. [» More info](#)
- APR 23** [A look at the postsecondary enrollment of students who took career and](#)

#### THE CONDITION OF EDUCATION



Browse key indicators on the condition of education in the United States at all levels, from prekindergarten through postsecondary, as well as labor force outcomes and international comparisons. The indicators summarize important developments and trends using the latest statistics, which are updated throughout the year as new data become available.

You may see a couple of popups — just agree. Once you've clicked through those, you should see the code book home screen. From here, you can access a number of data sets. We'll focus on ELS, but as I said above, the process is the same: just choose another data set from the code book homepage if you'd rather use that data.

The screenshot shows the NCES Online Codebook homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the IES > NCES logo, the National Center for Education Statistics, a menu icon, a search bar, and links for 'Need Help?', 'LOG IN', and 'Feedback'. Below the header, a teal banner reads 'Public-Use' and 'Explore the Codebooks, Download Datasets, Create Syntax'. It includes a sub-instruction: 'Online Codebook guides you through selecting a survey, population, and variables relevant to your analysis.' To the right of the banner is a 'Take a Tour' button. The main content area displays eight dataset cards. From left to right, top to bottom: 1. ECLS-K (Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99) with a yellow sun icon and a link to '1998-99'. 2. ELS (Education Longitudinal Study of 2002) with a green circular logo and a link to '2002-12, including PETS'. 3. HSLS (High School Longitudinal Study of 2009) with a blue circular logo and a link to '2009-16, including HS transcripts'. 4. NELS (National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988) with a purple circular logo and links to '1988-00', '1988-94', and '1988-92'. 5. NHES (National Household Education Survey) with a red square logo and links to years from '1993' to '2016'. 6. SASS (Schools and Staffing and Teacher Follow-up Surveys) with a red apple icon and a link to '1999-00 TFS'. 7. SSOCS (School Survey on Crime and Safety) with a red building icon and links to '2007-08' and '2005-06'. The background of the content area features a blurred image of a person wearing glasses and a stack of books.

When you choose ELS, you'll see the online code book. You can (and should) use this to learn about variables — their definitions, how they're constructed, missing values, *etc.* You can also use this tool to only select a few variables for download. Don't do that! You should plan to download the full data set and do any filtering or subsetting in your analytic code.

Click the *Downloads* button to get the data.

Use at least one search selection above to explore this codebook.

Select variables of interest to create a syntax file for your preferred software. Download the dataset formatted for your preferred software.

**Data Files**

**DOWNLOAD**

**CREATE SYNTAX**

**Click here to download the data files**

You'll be presented with a number of file types. Because you are using R, you could read in all these data types — either with standard functions or functions from the tidyverse **haven** package.

My recommendation:

- **If you don't care about labels:** Download the CSV version for maximum portability
- **If you'd like labeled data:** Download the STATA version and use `haven::read_dta()` to input the data

I generally like labels, so we'll choose the STATA version

The screenshot shows a web browser window for nces.ed.gov. At the top, the NCES logo and menu are visible. Below the header, the title "ONLINE CODEBOOK" is displayed next to a blue and green icon. On the right side of the header, there are links for "Switch Codebook", "Need Help?", "LOG IN", and "Feedback". A search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a "Go" button are also present. The main content area has a teal header bar with the text "ELS (Education Longitudinal Study of 2002)". Below this, the heading "Select Format" is centered. Under "Statistical Software Formats", there are five buttons: SPSS, SAS, S-Plus, Stata, and R. Under "Generic Formats", there are two buttons: ASCII and CSV. At the bottom left, a teal button labeled "BACK" with a left arrow icon is visible. The footer of the page contains the NCES logo and navigation links for IES, NCEC, NCEER, NCES, and various policies and standards.

After choosing your file version, you can finally download the files. Go ahead and click each box to download all the files.

The screenshot shows a web browser window for the NCES Online Codebook. The URL is nces.ed.gov. The page title is "IES > NCES National Center for Education Statistics". The main content area is titled "ELS (Education Longitudinal Study of 2002)" and features a section for "Download Data Files". It lists four download options:

- DOWNLOAD ELS 2002-12 STUDENT FILE V1.0 STATA (zip file contains 1 file (16.0 MB))
- DOWNLOAD ELS 2002-12 STUDENT BRR FILE V1.0 STATA (zip file contains 1 file (163.7 MB))
- DOWNLOAD ELS 2002-12 OTHER FILES V1.0 STATA (zip file contains 3 files (932 KB))
- DOWNLOAD ELS 2002-12 V1.0 CODEBOOK AND LAYOUT (zip file contains 6 files (1.2 MB))

At the bottom of the page is a footer with links to various NCES and IES resources.

## NLS

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (aside from a lot of other useful information) has a number of National Longitudinal Surveys. These are similar to those from the NCES, but much more expansive. They include:

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97)
- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79)
- NLSY79 Children and Young Adults (NLSCYA)
- National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Mature Women (NLSW)
- National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Men and Older Men (NLSM)

If you decide to use one of these surveys in your work, it will probably be the NLSY97, which began following a cohort of high schools students in 1997.

An official website of the United States government [Here is how you know](#)

bls.gov

United States Department of Labor

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## National Longitudinal Surveys

NLS HOME

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SEARCH NLS

NLS TOPICS

NLSY97

NLSY79

NLSY79 CHILD & YOUNG ADULT

NLS ORIGINAL COHORTS

OBTAIN DATA

The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) are a set of surveys designed to gather information at multiple points in time on the labor market activities and other significant life events of several groups of men and women. NLS data have served as an important tool for economists, sociologists, and other researchers for more than 50 years. [Learn about the different NLS cohorts.](#)

**Announcement**

» [Redesign of various National Longitudinal Surveys webpages](#)

**On This Page**

» [NLS General Overviews](#)

» [NLS News Releases](#)

» [NLS Tables](#)

» [NLS Data](#)

» [NLS Publications](#)

» [NLS FAQs](#)

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**NLS General Overviews**

- [Introduction to the NLS Cohorts](#)— Information about the Bureau of Labor Statistics NLS Programs.
- Topics covered in the surveys:
  - [National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 \(NLSY97\)](#) 
  - National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79)
  - NLSY79 Children and Young Adults (NLSCYA)
  - National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women and Mature Women (NLSW)
  - National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men and Older Men (NLSM)
- [Accessing NLS Data](#)— Information on how to access public use and confidential data.
- [NLS Glossary](#)— This section provides glossary of terms that are important to the NLS cohorts.

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Analysis Team. The NLS program celebrated its 50th anniversary with a conference on September 17, 2017.

## Investigator

Scrolling down on the NLS97 page, you'll see a section for **Accessing** the data via the *Investigator*. Because the NLSY is so large, you may choose to go this route.

**Accessing Data**

View [Accessing Data](#) for detailed information on accessing the NLSY97 public-use and the confidential files. The public-use NLS data are available on the [Investigator](#). The links below provide answers to frequently asked questions about requesting the NLSY97 Geocode, Zip-Code and Census Tract files, and the School Survey data.

- [How to Request Access to the NLSY79, NLSY79 Young Adult and NLSY97 Geocode data?](#)
- [How to Request Access to the NLSY Zip Code and Census Tract Files and NLSY97 School Survey Data?](#)

**Latest News Release**

- **May 05, 2020:** Labor Market Activity, Education, and Partner Status Among America's Young Adults at 33: Results from a Longitudinal Survey [NLSY97 Round 18] ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([Supplemental Tables](#))
- [View Archived NLSY97 News Releases](#)
- [View News Releases Tables](#)

**Cross-Cohort NLSY79/97 Overview**

An NLSY79/NLSY97 cross-cohort beta release is now available on Investigator. This dataset harmonizes NLS data across two cohorts, allowing users added opportunities to perform cross-cohort comparisons. Initially the dataset includes interview date, reason for noninterview, age, marital status, highest grade attended, highest grade completed, and employment status, with possible expansion to over 100 variables. Fixed background variables are also included, such as sex, race, and AFQT score. See [Cross Cohort Harmonization Overview](#) document for more information. To access the data, go to <https://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator> and select "NLS Cross Cohort Beta."

**Last Modified Date:** May 05, 2020

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You'll be shown a new external link. Click it to go to the data investigator.

NLSY97 Data Overview

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An official website of the United States government [Here is how you know](#)

United States Department of Labor

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## BLS Information

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<https://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator/pages/login>

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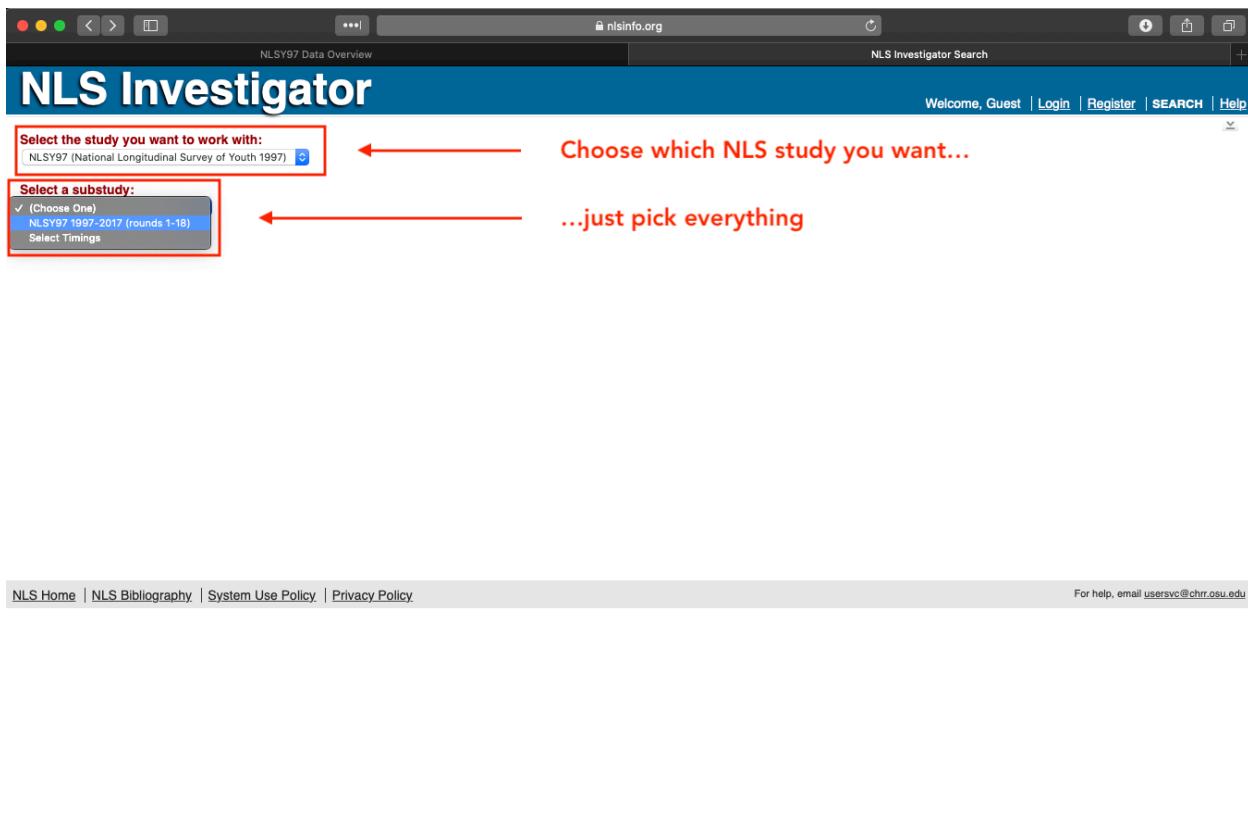
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Washington, DC 20212-0001

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<a href="#">Join our Mailing Lists</a>		

You can create a log in, which is nice if you come back often since you can save tag sets (variable groups you want to download), or just log in as a guest.

The screenshot shows the NLS Investigator login page. On the left, there is a blue sidebar with a 'Log In' section containing fields for 'Username' and 'Password', and buttons for 'Forgot Password' and 'Login'. The main content area has a title 'Welcome to NLS Investigator' and a paragraph about the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS). It lists 'The seven NLS cohorts are:' followed by a bulleted list: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97), National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), NLSY79 Child and Young Adult, Older Men, Mature Women, Young Men, and Young Women. Below this, a note says 'To access data for any of the seven NLS cohorts use the login box to the left or [begin searching](#) as guest.' A red arrow points from the text 'You can log in, or just search as a guest' to the 'begin searching' link. At the bottom, there are links for 'NLS Home', 'NLS Bibliography', 'System Use Policy', 'Privacy Policy', and 'For help, email usersvc@chrr.osu.edu'.

Once inside, the investigator will allow you to choose which NLS data you want to access. So even though we got here via the NLSY97 page, we can still look at NLSY79 data if we want. Whichever you choose, go ahead and choose to look at all data rounds.



Now you can explore the data via the menu tree on the left side of the page. When you find a variable or set of variables you want to download, be sure to click the box next to the variable name. When you are finished, click the *Save/Download* tab.

Screenshot of the NLS Investigator interface showing the 'Review Selected Variables' screen.

**Select the study you want to work with:** NLSY97 (National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997)

**Select a substudy:** NLSY97 1997-2017 (rounds 1-18) Released December 05, 2019

**Additional Resources:** Errata, Documentation (user's guide, questionnaires and other materials), Custom Weights

To start a new search [click here](#)

**Click here when ready to download** (red arrow points to the 'Save / Download' button)

**Choose Tagsets Variable Search Review Selected Variables (6) Codebook Save / Download** (the 'Save / Download' button is highlighted with a red box)

**Browse Index Browse Index with Search Search**

**Index of Selected Variables**

- Education, Training & Achievement Scores (23402)
  - Education (18222)
    - Summary measures (518)
      - All schools (279)
        - Cumulative (15)
        - + By year (264)
      - + Primary & secondary school (124)
      - + College (115)
    - + Schooling history (1640)
    - + School-specific characteristics (roster) (16064)
  - Training (810)
    - + Cognitive tests (19)
    - + Transcript data (4458)
  - Employment (27430)
  - Household, Geography & Contextual Variables (9200)
  - Dating, Marriage & Cohabitation (1718)
    - + Sexual Activity, Pregnancy & Fertility (1749)
    - + Children (2387)
    - + Parents, Family Process & Childhood (187)

**QUESTION NAME VARIABLE TITLE YEAR**

RNUM	QUESTION NAME	VARIABLE TITLE	YEAR
1	Z9032200 CVC_GRADES_REPEAT_EVER_2007 # GRADES R HAS EVER REPEATED 2007		XRND
2	Z9032300 CVC_GRADE_SKIPPED_EVER_2007 # GRADES R EVER SKIPPED 2007		XRND
3	Z9083800 CVC_HGC_EVER	RS HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED	XRND
4	Z9083900 CVC_HIGHEST_DEGREE_EVER	HIGHEST DEGREE RECEIVED	XRND
5	Z9084000 CVC_SCH_ATTEND_EVER	# SCHOOLS R ATTEND EVER	XRND
6	Z9084100 CVC_GED	MONTH R RECEIVED GED	XRND
7	Z9084200 CVC_HS_DIPLOMA	DATE RECEIVED HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	XRND
8	Z9084300 CVC_AA_DEGREE	DATE RECEIVED ASSOCIATES DEGREE	XRND
9	Z9084400 CVC_BA_DEGREE	DATE RECEIVED BACHELORS DEGREE	XRND
10	Z9084500 CVC_PROF_DEGREE	DATE R RECEIVED PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	XRND
11	Z9084600 CVC_PHD_DEGREE	DATE R RECEIVED DOCTORAL DEGREE	XRND
12	Z9084700 CVC_MA_DEGREE	DATE R RECEIVED MASTERS DEGREE	XRND
13	Z9084800 CVC_HS_LEFT_DATE	DATE LEFT PRIMARY/SECONDARY SCHOOL	XRND
14	Z9084900 CVC_HS_LEFT_HGC	HIGHEST PRIMARY/SECONDARY GRADE COMPLETED	XRND
15	Z9085000 CVC_HS_LEFT_HGA	HIGHEST PRIMARY/SECONDARY GRADE ATTENDED	XRND

**Click in box to select variable** (red arrow points to the first column of the table)

On the next screen, you'll be able to save your tag set (meaning, not download the data, but name and keep the variable list you've chosen for a later date) or download.

Choose the *Advanced Download* tab. Within that tab, choose which file type you want to download (I've chosen just plain CSV here) and what you want to call the download. When you're ready, click the *download* button.

Screenshot of the NLS Investigator website showing the Advanced Download process.

**Select the study you want to work with:** NLSY97 (National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997)

**Select a substudy:** NLSY97 1997-2017 (rounds 1-18) Released December 05, 2019

**Additional Resources:** Errata, Documentation (user's guide, questionnaires and other materials), Custom Weights

**Choose Tagsets | Variable Search | Review Selected Variables (6) | Codebook | Save / Download**

**Save Tagset | Basic Download | Advanced Download (highlighted with a red box) | Manage Downloads**

**Customize your advanced download:**

**(1) Advanced Download:** Create Download of Data (radio button selected) →

- Tagset (list of selected variables)
- SAS® control file (includes the datafile of selected variables)
- SPSS® control file (includes the datafile of selected variables)
- STATA® dictionary file of selected variables
- R® Source code (includes the datafile of selected variables)
- Codebook of selected variables
- Short Description File
- Comma-delimited datafile of selected variables (to be read in Excel, etc.)

Column headers -- Use Reference Number Question Name (does not guarantee uniqueness)

**(2) Choose file type(s):** (arrow pointing to the file type checkboxes)

**(3) Name and download:** Filename: nlsy97\_subset → (arrow pointing to the filename input field)

Download status appears under 'Manage Downloads' tab.  
Downloads may be deleted after 10 days of inactivity.

NLS Home | NLS Bibliography | System Use Policy | Privacy Policy      For help, email usersvc@chrr.osu.edu

After your data set is prepared, you can download it to your computer.

Screenshot of the NLS Investigator website showing the Manage Downloads tab.

**Select the study you want to work with:** NLSY97 (National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997)

**Select a substudy:** NLSY97 1997-2017 (rounds 1-18) Released December 05, 2019

**Additional Resources:** Errata, Documentation (user's guide, questionnaires and other materials), Custom Weights

**Choose Tagsets | Variable Search | Review Selected Variables (6) | Codebook | Save / Download**

**Save Tagset | Basic Download | Advanced Download | Manage Downloads (highlighted with a red box)**

**Download Status:** All downloads are available. Please click a download link below to begin downloading.

**All Available Downloads:**

Date	Study	Name	Size	Download
2020-05-16 15:38:15	NLSY97	nlsy97_subset	37.1K	<a href="#">download</a> (highlighted with a red box)

[Delete Selected Files](#)

NLS Home | NLS Bibliography | System Use Policy | Privacy Policy      For help, email usersvc@chrr.osu.edu

## Direct download of full NLS data sets

Alternately, you can directly download the full NLS data files at [www.nlsinfo.org/accessing-data-cohorts](http://www.nlsinfo.org/accessing-data-cohorts). I would recommend this approach if you think you're going to want a large number of variables. Also, you'll eventually find it easier to do your variable selection in R rather than via the Investigator.

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the NLS website. The URL in the address bar is [nlsinfo.org](http://nlsinfo.org). The page title is "National Longitudinal Surveys". The main navigation menu includes "Getting Started", "Cohorts", and "Access Data / Investigator". The "Access Data / Investigator" tab is currently selected. On the left, there is a sidebar titled "HELPFUL LINKS" with links to "Subscribe for Updates", "Tutorials", "Investigator User Guide", "Investigator Video Tutorials", and "Glossary". The main content area is titled "Accessing Data / Cohorts". It contains text about building custom data sets in Investigator instead of downloading entire sets due to the large amount of NLS data. It also provides information about available download files (SAS, R, Excel) and reference numbers. A section titled "Currently unavailable:" lists cohorts that are not currently available: "NLS Mature Women" (born 1922-37), "NLS Young Women" (born 1943-53), "NLS Older Men" (born 1906-21), and "NLS Young Men" (born 1941-52). At the bottom, there is footer information for the National Longitudinal Survey and user services.

## IPEDS

For institution-level information, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) will likely be your first stop. While the IPEDS site ([nces.ed.gov/ipeds](http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds)) will let you explore individual institutions or use a portal to select particular variables (like the BLS investigator), you'll want to just download the raw files. Begin by selecting *Use the Data*.

IES > NCES National Center for Education Statistics ☰ MENU

IPEDS Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

Search IPEDS 🔍 ⌂ ⓘ ⓘ ⓘ ⌂

Your primary source for information on U.S. colleges, universities, and technical and vocational institutions. Learn More

Find your college Use The Data Report Your Data Join In

IES > NCES National Center for Education Statistics

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IES IES Centers

Home NCEE

About NCER

IES Policies and Standards

Public Access Policy ERIC

Privacy and Security Policies Sitemap

NCEES Statistical Standards Organizational Chart

On the next page, look in the right column for the section *Survey Data*. From the drop down menu, choose *Complete data files*.

**NB:** If you know how to work with databases, the *Access databases* may be useful for you. But to use these, you either need a Microsoft Access license or a program to convert them to another format (like SQLite).

IES > NCES National Center for Education Statistics ≡ MENU

**IPEDS** Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

Search IPEDS 🔍 Home Help User Profile FAQ ≡

IPEDS Data Use Help Desk (866) 558-0658 or [ipedstools@rti.org](mailto:ipedstools@rti.org)

## Use the Data

Access IPEDS data submitted to NCES through our data tools or download the data to conduct your research

**Data Explorer** 🔍  
Search for tables, charts, publications, or other products related to postsecondary education by keywords and filters.

**IPEDS Survey Components** 📊  
Learn more about the individual IPEDS survey components: view training videos, infographics, answers to frequently asked questions, survey forms, and more.

**Data Trends** 📈  
Use the Trend Generator to view trends on most frequently asked subject areas including: Enrollment, Completions, Graduation Rates, Employees and Staff, Institutional Revenues, and Financial Aid.

**Look Up an Institution** 🔍  
Look up information for one institution at a time. Data can be viewed in two forms: institution profile (similar to College Navigator) and reported data (institution's response to each survey question).

**Data Feedback Report** 📊  
Download, print, or customize an institution's Data Feedback Report, a report that graphically summarizes selected institutional data and compares the data with peer institutions.

**Statistical Tables** 📊  
Create simple descriptive statistics (e.g., total, count, average, median, standard deviation, percentiles) on selected IPEDS institutions and variables.

**Compare Institutions** 📊  
Download IPEDS data files for more than 7,000 institutions and up to 250 variables. Data files are provided in comma separated value (\*.csv) format.

**Survey Data** ⬇️ **(1) Choose Survey Data**  
Data are available starting with the 1980-81 collection year for the *Complete data files* and *Custom data files* functions, which zip the data into comma separated value (\*.csv). Beginning with the 2004-05 collection year, data for each collection year are compiled into an Access database.  
Select download option  
Access database  
**Complete data files** ? (2) Choose Complete data files  
Custom data files  
Select your shortcut

**Publications and Products** 📄  
Review publications using IPEDS data including First Looks, Web Tables, methodology reports, and Digest Tables.

**Resources** 📚  
[Overview of IPEDS Data](#)  
[IPEDS Glossary](#)  
[Archived Survey Forms](#)  
Delta Cost Project

You may see a popup window — if so, just agree. You'll now see a pretty lonely page. If you have a specific file or year you know you want, use the two drop down menus to filter your search. Otherwise, just click the *Continue* button to see your options.

The screenshot shows a web browser window for the IPEDS Data Center at [nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov). The main header includes the IES > NCES logo, the National Center for Education Statistics, and a menu icon. Below the header, the IPEDS logo and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System are displayed. The page title is "Complete Data Files". A navigation bar at the top right includes "Data Tools | Help Desk 1 866-558-0658", "Start over", "Save session", "Help", and a "MAIN MENU" button. A search bar with "Search" and "Go" buttons is also present. The main content area features a blue header bar with "Years & Surveys" and dropdown menus for "All years" and "All surveys". A red arrow points to a blue "Continue" button. Below this, a note states "Data files are available in ZIP format.". At the bottom of the page is a footer with links to various IES and NCES centers, policies, and additional resources.

Click the links in the *Data File* column to get zipped versions of the CSV files. If you want a Stata data file instead, choose the link from the *Stata Data File* column. You will probably want to grab the *Dictionary* file while you're at it.

*How do I know which file I need?*, you might be asking. If you are unsure, you may want to download the dictionary file first and check for the data element(s) you think you need. After a while, you'll get better at knowing (or reasonably guessing) which file is the one you need based on the names.

The screenshot shows the IPEDS Data Center interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Data Tools', 'Help Desk 1 866-558-0658', 'Start over', 'Save session', 'Help', and 'MAIN MENU'. Below this is a search bar with a 'Search' button and a 'Go' button.

The main content area is titled 'Complete Data Files' and has a 'Data Release Info' link. Below this is a section titled 'Years & Surveys' with tabs for 'All years' and 'All surveys', and a 'Continue' button.

A table lists data files available in ZIP format for various surveys in 2018. The columns include Year, Survey, Title, Data File, Stata Data File, Programs, and Dictionary. The 'Stata Data File' column contains links like 'HD2018' and 'HD2018\_STATA', which are highlighted with red boxes and labeled 'Choose CSV or STATA file'. The 'Dictionary' column contains links like 'Dictionary' and 'Dictionary', which are also highlighted with red boxes and labeled 'Get data dictionary'.

Year	Survey	Title	Data File	Stata Data File	Programs	Dictionary
2018	Institutional Characteristics	Directory information	<a href="#">HD2018</a>	<a href="#">HD2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Institutional Characteristics	Educational offerings, organization, services and athletic associations	<a href="#">IC2018</a>	<a href="#">IC2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Institutional Characteristics	Student charges for academic year programs	<a href="#">IC2018_AY</a>	<a href="#">IC2018_AY_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Institutional Characteristics	Student charges by program (vocational programs)	<a href="#">IC2018_PY</a>	<a href="#">IC2018_PY_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Institutional Characteristics	Response status for all survey components	<a href="#">FLAGS2018</a>	<a href="#">FLAGS2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	12-Month Enrollment	12-month unduplicated headcount: 2017-18	<a href="#">EFFY2018</a>	<a href="#">EFFY2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	12-Month Enrollment	12-month instructional activity: 2017-18	<a href="#">EFIA2018</a>	<a href="#">EFIA2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	12-Month Enrollment	Response status for all survey components	<a href="#">FLAGS2018</a>	<a href="#">FLAGS2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Admissions and Test Scores	Admission considerations, applications, admissions, employees and test scores, fall 2018	<a href="#">ADM2018</a>	<a href="#">ADM2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Admissions and Test Scores	Response status for all survey components	<a href="#">FLAGS2018</a>	<a href="#">FLAGS2018_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Fall Enrollment	Race/ethnicity, gender, attendance status, and level of student: Fall 2018	<a href="#">EF2018A</a>	<a href="#">EF2018A_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>
2018	Fall Enrollment	Major field of study, race/ethnicity, gender, attendance status, and	<a href="#">EF2018CP</a>	<a href="#">EF2018CP_STATA</a>	SPSS, SAS, STATA	<a href="#">Dictionary</a>

## Download all of IPEDS via R

If you don't want to bother with the portal, I've written an R script that will download the entirety of IPEDS to your computer (a little over 1 GB if you only want one type of data file). See [github.com/btskinner/downloadipeds](https://github.com/btskinner/downloadipeds) for the script and information on how to use it.

## College Scorecard

Though it's intended to give students and their families better information about their college options, the College Scorecard offers data that's useful for research. In particular, you can find earnings data linked to schools and programs that you can't find anywhere else.

### Direct

If you go to the College Scorecard homepage ([collegescorecard.ed.gov](http://collegescorecard.ed.gov)), you'll see the portal that students use. Scroll to the bottom of the page.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the College Scorecard. At the top, the U.S. Department of Education logo and "College Scorecard" are displayed. Below this, a blue banner features the text "FIND THE RIGHT FIT." and "Find out about colleges: their programs, costs, admissions, results, and more." Three search options are available: "CUSTOM SEARCH", "NAME SEARCH" (which is selected), and "SHOW ME OPTIONS". A search bar with a magnifying glass icon and placeholder text "Type to search" is centered below the banner. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled "Alternative Pathways to a Career", contains text about apprenticeships and a button labeled "FIND ONE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU!". The right column, titled "Learn More About Paying for College", contains text about financial aid and a button labeled "START MY FAFSA® FORM".

At the bottom of the page, you'll see a link to download the data files that power the Scorecard.

The screenshot shows the same homepage as above, but with a red arrow pointing from the text "Click to access full data files" on the left side towards the "Powered by" link at the bottom of the page. The "Powered by" link is highlighted with a red box. The bottom of the page also includes a note about ZIP code latitude and longitude provided by GeoNames under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License.

On the data page, you can download the full set of files or just the latest data. Unless you have a good reason to do otherwise, I would recommend getting all the data. You may also want to follow the *Documentation* tab to get the data documentation.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
College Scorecard

DATA HOME DOCUMENTATION CHANGE LOG GLOSSARY

**Download the Data** You may want to get documentation, too

Download the data that appear on the College Scorecard, as well as supporting data on student completion, debt and repayment, earnings, and more.

This data was last updated March 30, 2020.

**All Data Files** • Click to download files  
289 MB ZIP

Most Recent Institution-Level Data  
148 MB CSV

Most Recent Data by Field of Study  
51 MB CSV

Looking for help? Visit [StackExchange](#) or email the help desk at [scorecarddata@rti.org](mailto:scorecarddata@rti.org) For inquiries by members of the press, please contact [press@ed.gov](mailto:press@ed.gov).

Powered by [College Scorecard Data](#) | v2.2.1 | [Contact Us](#) | [Notices](#) | [Glossary](#) | [U.S. Department of Education](#)  
ZIP Code latitude and longitude provided by [GeoNames](#) under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License.

## rscorecard

You can also download College Scorecard data directly from R using the **rscorecard** package, which accesses Scorecard data via an API. See [btskinner.io/rscorecard](http://btskinner.io/rscorecard) for more information and examples.

## American Community Survey (ACS)

The American Community Survey (ACS) is part of the U.S. Census that, unlike the decennial census, collects data each year. While it has information on education that you may want to use directly, the ACS is also a great source for place-based data that you can merge with other data sets (student-level data, for example, if you know where they live). The ACS homepage is here: [census.gov/programs-surveys/acs](http://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs).

There are a few ways to access ACS data. I will show you how to get the public use micro sample (PUMS) data. From the ACS home page, click on the *Data* link on the left.

United States Census Bureau

BROWSE BY TOPIC EXPLORE DATA LIBRARY SURVEYS/ PROGRAMS INFORMATION FOR... FIND A CODE ABOUT US

// Census.gov > Our Surveys & Programs > American Community Survey (ACS)

## American Community Survey (ACS)

The American Community Survey (ACS) helps local officials, community leaders, and businesses understand the changes taking place in their communities. It is the premier source for detailed population and housing information about our nation.

**Data**

Guidance for Data Users

Geography & ACS

Technical Documentation

Methodology

Library

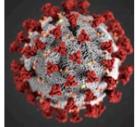
Operations and Administration

Contact Us

< Back to Our Surveys & Programs

 Respond to the ACS Learn how









How do I respond to the ACS?

ACS data help with COVID-19 response efforts

Should I respond to both the ACS and 2020 Census?

**Data**

**2018 Data Release**

Learn more about 2018 ACS data releases, including the latest release of new 2014-2018 ACS 5-year PUMS files and Variance Replicate Estimates, as well as the new 2018 ACS 1-year Supplemental Estimates.

Is this page helpful?

On the next screen, click on the *PUMS* link which again is on the left.

United States Census Bureau

BROWSE BY TOPIC EXPLORE DATA LIBRARY SURVEYS/ PROGRAMS INFORMATION FOR... FIND A CODE ABOUT US

// Census.gov > Our Surveys & Programs > American Community Survey (ACS) > American Community Survey Data

## American Community Survey Data

**PUMS Data**

New Data Every Year!

The American Community Survey collects data on an ongoing basis, January through December, to provide every community with the information they need to make important decisions

We release new data every year, in the form of estimates, in a variety of tables, tools, and analytical reports.

**Data Tables and Tools**

The Data Tables and Tools pages provide explanations and links to our most popular data tables on data.census.gov.

**Data Profiles**

**Narrative Profiles**

**Subject Tables**

Related Information

Federal Statistical Research Data Centers

Available APIs

Contact Us

You May Be Interested In

RELATED TOPICS

Contact Us

AROUND THE BUREAU

Email Updates

MOST POPULAR

Share Your ACS Data Story

Is this page helpful?

There are a couple of ways to get PUMS data: from the old FTP site or the newer data.census.gov site. Though it's less pretty, I'll show you the FTP version (if you have used FTP applications before to access data, you can use those here).

The screenshot shows the census.gov website with the "PUMS Data" page selected. The left sidebar has links for AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS), Data Tables & Tools, Data via FTP, Summary File Data, PUMS Data (which is highlighted), Variance Replicate Tables, Race/Ethnicity and American Indian & Alaska Native Data, Custom Tables, and a link to Back to American Community Survey Data. Below these is a "Respond to the ACS" section with a "Learn how" link. The main content area has a search bar and navigation links for EXPLORE DATA, LIBRARY, SURVEYS/ PROGRAMS, INFORMATION FOR..., FIND A CODE, and ABOUT US. The breadcrumb navigation shows: Census.gov > Our Surveys & Programs > American Community Survey (ACS) > American Community Survey Data > PUMS Data. The main title is "PUMS Data". Below it, a note says "Supporting documentation for the data below is available on the [PUMS Documentation](#) page." The central part of the page lists "Available on the FTP site" and "PUMS on data.census.gov". The "Available on the FTP site" section contains a table with rows for 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, and 2013 ACS PUMS files. The 2018 row is the top one. The "PUMS on data.census.gov" section contains a table with rows for 2014-2018 ACS 5-year PUMS, 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS, 2013-2017 ACS 5-year PUMS, 2017 ACS 1-year PUMS, 2012-2016 ACS 5-year PUMS, and 2016 ACS 1-year PUMS. The 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS row is the top one. A red box highlights the 2018 ACS PUMS link in the "Available on the FTP site" section. On the right side, there are "Related Information" links for Share Your ACS Data Story, Contact Us, Introduction to the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File, and a "You May Be Interested In" section with links for RELATED TOPICS, AROUND THE BUREAU, and MOST POPULAR. At the bottom right is a feedback box asking "Is this page helpful?" with "Yes" and "No" buttons.

Available on the FTP site	PUMS on data.census.gov
2018 ACS PUMS	2014-2018 ACS 5-year PUMS
2017 ACS PUMS	2018 ACS 1-year PUMS
2016 ACS PUMS	2013-2017 ACS 5-year PUMS
2015 ACS PUMS	2017 ACS 1-year PUMS
2014 ACS PUMS	2012-2016 ACS 5-year PUMS
2013 ACS PUMS	2016 ACS 1-year PUMS

You'll notice the FTP page looks like a file system. That's basically what it is. Click on the file name you want. For more information on whether you want 1-, 3-, or 5-year estimates, check out this page: [census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/estimates.html](http://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/estimates.html).

The screenshot shows a Mac OS X desktop interface with a browser window open to [www2.census.gov](http://www2.census.gov). The page displays a file directory for PUMS data. The columns are labeled 'Name', 'Last modified', 'Size', and 'Description'. Two entries are shown: '1-Year/' (modified 12-Nov-2019 08:34) and '5-Year/' (modified 29-Jan-2020 08:26). Below the directory, there are five main navigation sections: 'ABOUT US', 'FIND DATA', 'BUSINESS & ECONOMY', 'PEOPLE & HOUSEHOLDS', and 'SPECIAL TOPICS'. Each section contains several links to specific census programs and data products. At the bottom, there's a 'CONNECT WITH US' section with social media icons and links to accessibility, information quality, FOIA, data protection, and privacy policies.

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On the final page, you can choose data at the state level. There are two basic types of files, each pertaining to sections of the survey:

- **Housing:** These files start with *h* after the underscore
- **Person:** These files start with *p* after the underscore

For more information about which file to use or PUMS more generally, visit [census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/pums/about.html](http://census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/pums/about.html).

**Choose your state file(s) ("h" for housing; "p" for person")**

- "csv\_hak.zip" = Housing file for Alaska
- "csv\_pak.zip" = Person file for Alaska

Name	Last modified	Size	Description
Parent Directory		-	
PUMS_file_naming_convention.pdf	12-Nov-2019 08:34	36K	
csv_hak.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:19	709K	
csv_hal.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:19	3.8M	
csv_har.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:19	2.4M	
csv_haz.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:19	5.0M	
csv_hca.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:19	23M	
csv_hco.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:19	4.1M	
csv_hct.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	2.7M	
csv_hdc.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	727K	
csv_hde.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	921K	
csv_hfl.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	15M	
csv_hga.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	7.2M	
csv_hhi.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	1.1M	
csv_hia.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	2.5M	
csv_hid.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	1.4M	
csv_hil.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	8.9M	
csv_hin.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	4.9M	
csv_hks.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:18	2.3M	
csv_hky.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	3.4M	
csv_hla.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	3.5M	
csv_hma.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	4.9M	
csv_hmd.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	4.2M	
csv_hme.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	1.4M	
csv_hmi.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	7.6M	
csv_hmn.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	4.1M	
csv_hmo.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	4.7M	
csv_hms.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	2.3M	
csv_hmt.zip	31-Oct-2019 15:17	1.0M	

## Other

Below are some other data sources you may find useful, either on their own or joined with the data sets above.

- Current Population Survey ([www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html))
- TIGER/Line Shapefiles ([www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files/time-series/geo/tiger-line-file.html](http://www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files/time-series/geo/tiger-line-file.html))
- Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov/data/](http://www.bls.gov/data/))
- Delta Cost Project ([deltacostproject.org/delta-cost-data](http://deltacostproject.org/delta-cost-data))
- Urban Institute Data Explorer ([educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer/](http://educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer/))
- PISA ([www.oecd.org/pisa/data/](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/))