

Your work journey matters



We're listening.

NLSY
97

Your experiences in the job world matter —

They're not only unique to you, but they're also part of a larger story about American workers. The NLSY97 interview asks about factors such as what job sector you work in, the length of time spent in a job, and the impact of your work on your health. When you share your thoughts and experiences, you help shape initiatives and policies for your generation — and all Americans.

Share your employment story



Here's a quick look at NLSY97 work evolution, comparing what people told us in 2001 & then 20 years later in 2021.

Careers over the years

When we started this survey, you might have been imagining how you could apply your favorite school subjects to a future career. Several years later, many of you were getting your first official jobs and learning about real-world topics like direct deposit and taxes. We've kept track of how your jobs change over time, and we've seen you mature professionally, shaping the workforce in new ways.



An increase in people working in executive, admin, and management-related roles



A decrease in people working in sales-related positions, along with restaurant jobs¹

Looking back: Your very first “job”!

Do you remember the first time you earned money regularly? If you were a teen in 1997, chances are you earned your first few bucks mowing lawns, babysitting the neighbor’s kids, or delivering newspapers before school. It wasn’t glamorous, but it was the start of learning how to be a part of the workforce — and feeling just a little more grown up. For your very first survey in 1997, we recorded any kind of work that you mentioned, even if it wasn’t with an official employer.² Let’s take a trip back in time and look at your answers. Some of these “jobs” are pretty unique, while others are timeless classics.

CHOPPING WOOD



BUSSING TABLES



CARNIVAL WORK



PET SITTING



Some other work mentioned: House cleaning, mowing, carpentry, car repair, farm work, modeling, life guarding, food prep work, and, of course, “chores.”

TRIVIA TIME: Test your skills on job topics

Answers at bottom right of page.

1 Q: Which American fashion brand sent a casual business wear “guide” to companies’ HR departments, fueling the rise of Casual Fridays in the 90s?

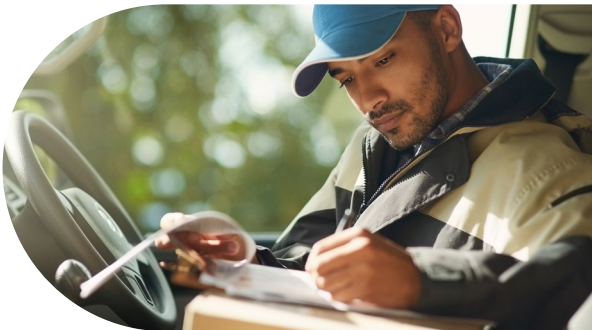
- A) Levi Strauss & Co. B) Tommy Hilfiger
C) Abercrombie & Fitch D) Gap

3 Q: What year did the dot-com bubble burst, accompanied by a crash in the stock market, collapsing internet businesses, and layoffs?

- A) 1996 B) 1998
C) 2000 D) 2002

2 Q: After peaking at 340,000 people in the 1950s, about how many telephone operators were working in the U.S. by 2019?

- A) 100 B) 1,500 C) 4,500



1. A) Levi Strauss & Co.
2. B.) 1,500 3. C) 2000

TRENDING TOPIC:

Does frequent job hopping lead to better wages?

You've probably seen the claims on social media that workers make more money over time by switching their jobs often (compared to sticking with the same job). But is this actually true? A 2022 study looked to your cohort for answers.

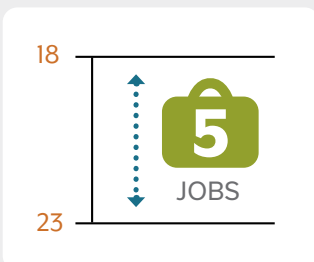
The study findings show that this is *partially true*.³ Workers who pursue moderate job-changing in their first two years working, but then taper off, actually end up earning more over time when compared to both persistent job changers and workers who stick around.



Check out some additional jobs-related research and info, directly from NLSY97 —

NUMBER OF JOBS OVER TIME

Individuals held an average of **9 jobs from ages 18 through 36**, with over **1/2 of them (about 5)** held between the **ages of 18 and 23**.⁴



PERFORMANCE PAY AND LONGER HOURS

Performance pay is associated with clocking **3 extra hours of work per week**.

It also increases the chances of working **more than a 50-hour week**.⁵



Your cohort has informed federal policy efforts!

'Noncompetes' are under review

Non-compete agreements (NCAs) have been under the microscope in recent years, as some policymakers have voiced concerns about the potential for job seekers to be negatively impacted.

Recently, the federal government cited non-compete data from NLSY97 workers to help inform discussions around non-competes. A pending Federal Trade Commission rule specifically references data from NLSY97 that shows that 18% of U.S. workers have employer non-compete agreements.⁶

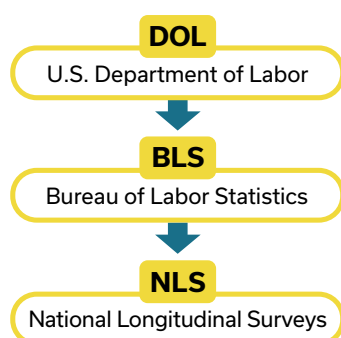
You're contributing to an effort that informs the nation

The National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) program you've participated in for years has interviewed more than 50,000 people since it started in the '60s and continues to add new survey groups (also known as cohorts).

The federal agency that sponsors the NLS is called the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). It's been around for more than 140 years, gathering key data related to the economy and labor. BLS is one of the main agencies of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The graphic at right shows how the groups are organized.

NLS is one of many important surveys that BLS conducts. More than two dozen BLS programs gather information from Americans, including the Consumer Price Index, and the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey which together generate the monthly jobs report.

BLS data, including the NLS survey data, are highly trusted across industries, communities and the government and are often cited in proceedings of the U.S. Congress and Supreme Court. We hope you wear this important role with pride when you participate in the next round of the survey.



Please keep in touch

Update your contact information by calling, or by sending us an email so that we can reach you to set an appointment later this year. (Contact information below.)

You also can complete the card at the right, remove it along the marked perforations, and mail it to us using the postage-paid envelope included in this mailing.

Detach and return this portion

- ☐ My name, address, email, or phone number has changed.
- ☐ Are you moving? When & where? _____

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Email

Phone (Home)

Phone (Work)

Phone (Cell)

May we text your cell phone? Yes No

Best way for us to reach you:

- ☐ In Person ☐ Home Phone
☐ Email ☐ Work Phone
☐ Text ☐ Cell Phone

Best time to call:

Days _____

Times _____

We always want to hear from you. Here's how to reach out!

Call: 877.504.1086

Text with your full name to: 312.835.1905

Email: nlsy97@norc.org

Visit: www.bls.gov/nls/nlsy97.htm



Sources/Citations:

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 cohort, 2001-2021 (rounds 5-20).

² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 cohort, 1997 (round 1).

³ Yankow, Jeffrey Jon. (2022). The effect of cumulative job mobility on early-career wage development: Does job mobility actually pay? *Social Science Quarterly* published online. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ssqu.13161>

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2 April 2024). Labor Market Experience, Education, Partner Status, and Health for those Born 1980-1984 News Release published online. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/nlsyth.htm>

⁵ Artz, Benjamin, Heywood, John S. (August 2023). Performance pay and work hours: US survey evidence. *Oxford Economic Papers* published online. <https://academic.oup.com/oxep/article/76/3/609/7238459>

⁶ Rothstein, Donna S., Starr, Evan. (June 2022). Noncompete agreements, bargaining, and wages: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997. *Monthly Labor Review, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics* published online. <https://doi.org/10.21916/mlr.2022.18>