

The General Social Survey



2016-2020 GSS PANEL

METHODOLOGICAL
PRIMER

Release 1



 **NORC** at the
University of
Chicago

OVERVIEW

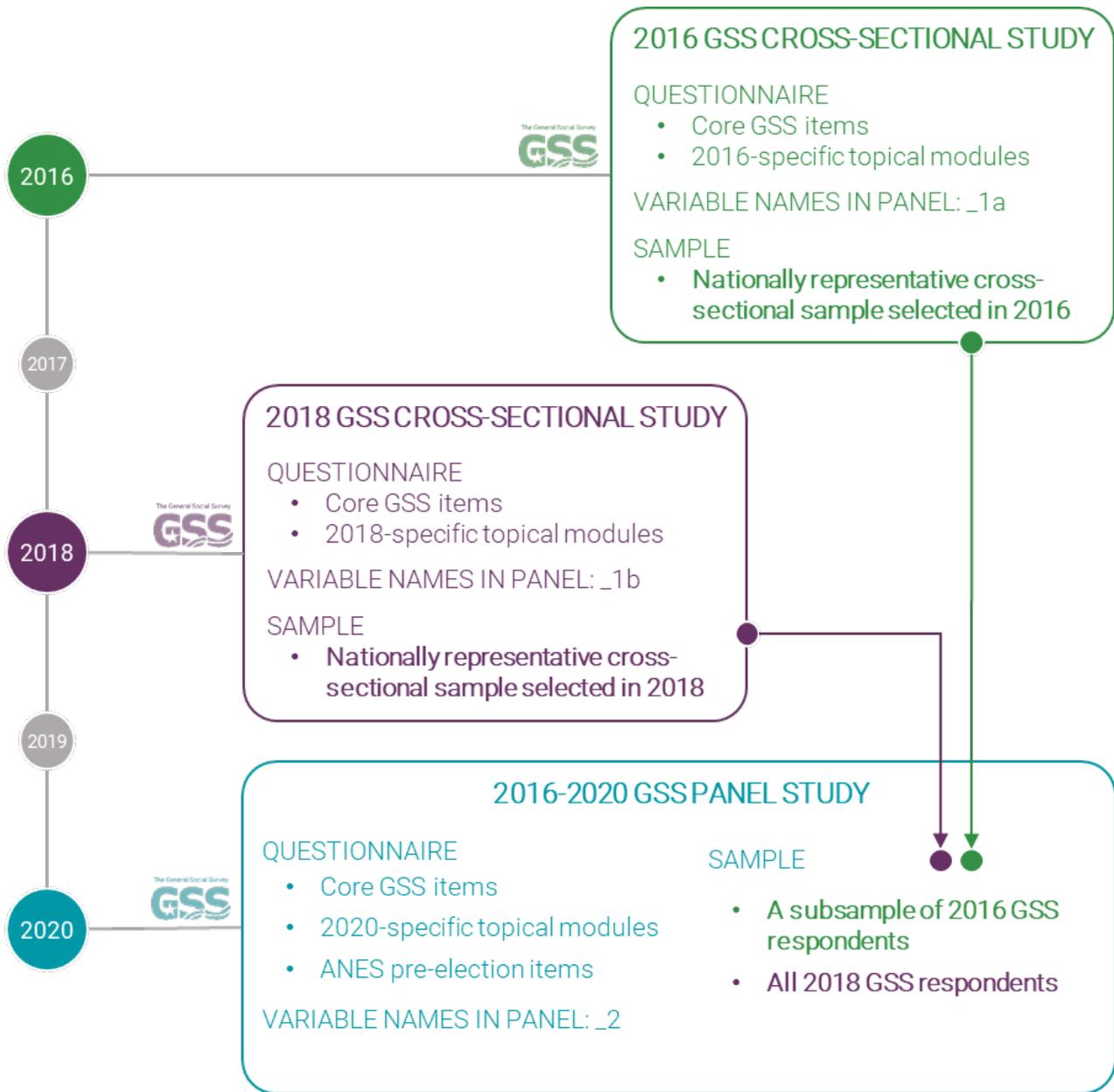
The General Social Survey is a nationally representative survey of the attitudes and behaviors of adults in the United States, which has been conducted annually or biannually since 1972. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 GSS was redesigned to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all people who participate in and administer the study. Under the advisement of the National Science Foundation and the GSS Board, NORC conducted the GSS as two studies; namely, 1) a panel re-interview of past respondents from the 2016 and 2018 cross-sectional GSS studies (referred to as the 2016-2020 GSS Panel), and 2) an independent fresh cross-sectional address-based sampling push to web study (referred to as 2020 cross-sectional survey).

The 2016-2020 GSS Panel contains three rounds of interviews – initial interviews with 2016 respondents, initial interviews with 2018 respondents, and follow-up interviews conducted in 2020. Rounds 1a (2016) and 1b (2018) were conducted via face-to-face interviews, while Round 2 was primarily conducted as a web self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were also given the option of a phone interview, if they preferred.

Respondents who participated in both waves of the 2016-2020 GSS Panel were asked the same questions from the GSS Core, either two or four years apart, as well as different topical modules in each wave. The 2016-2020 GSS Panel is an opportunity to study how people’s attitudes and behaviors have shifted over the past four years, as well as track person-level changes over the same time.

Figure 1 shows the relationship of 2016, 2018, and 2020 rounds of data collection for the 2016-2020 GSS Panel.

Figure 1: Configuration of 2016-2020 GSS Panel



National Org Study									
Mental Health									
Genes									
Abortion									
EPA Natural Environment									
Pets									
ANES									
Spirituality									
GSS Board Topical Items									
Contact									
Interviewer Paradata									

NEW METHODS

The GSS has been revised in many different ways due to the shift to web-based self-administered questionnaire. Many questions have been adapted to work better without an interviewer, while remaining as close as possible to their face-to-face versions. Additional information on all these changes can be found the 2020 GSS Panel Codebook. We encourage users to consult full documentation.

The 2016-2020 GSS Panel is not quite representative of all adults in 2020. Instead, it uses the respondents from 2018, as well as a random subset of the respondents from 2016, as its frame. While the two frames are close (the 2016 GSS was representative of all adults in 2016, and the 2018 GSS was representative of all adults in 2018), there may be some differences. The 2020 GSS cross-section, expected later in 2021, will be more representative of all adults in 2020. Given the differences, the 2016-2020 GSS Panel is designed to study person-level changes in three areas: 1) The passage of time, 2) the COVID-19 pandemic, and 3) the shift from face-to-face (F2F) to web self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) mode.